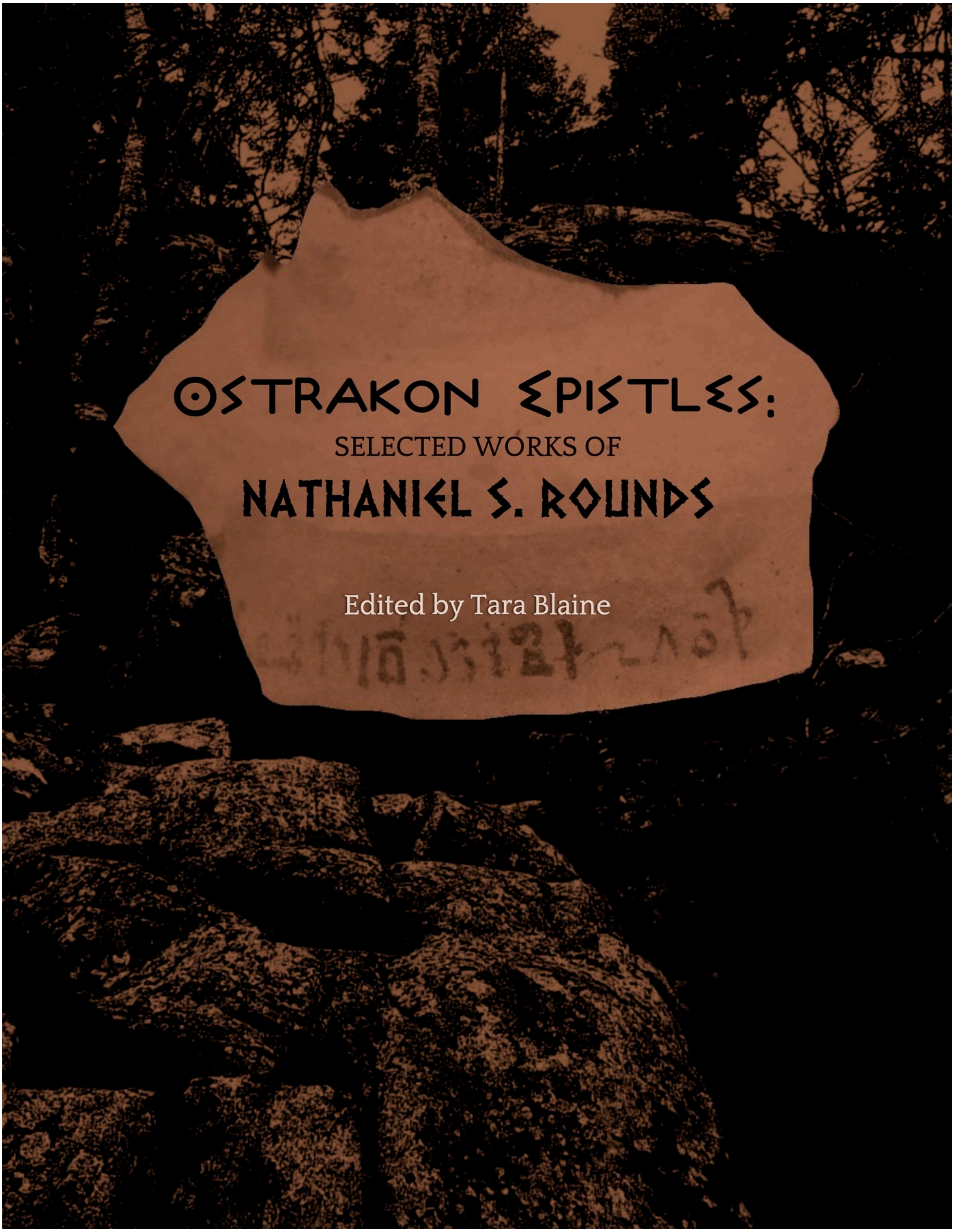


# OSTRAKON EPISTLES:

SELECTED WORKS OF

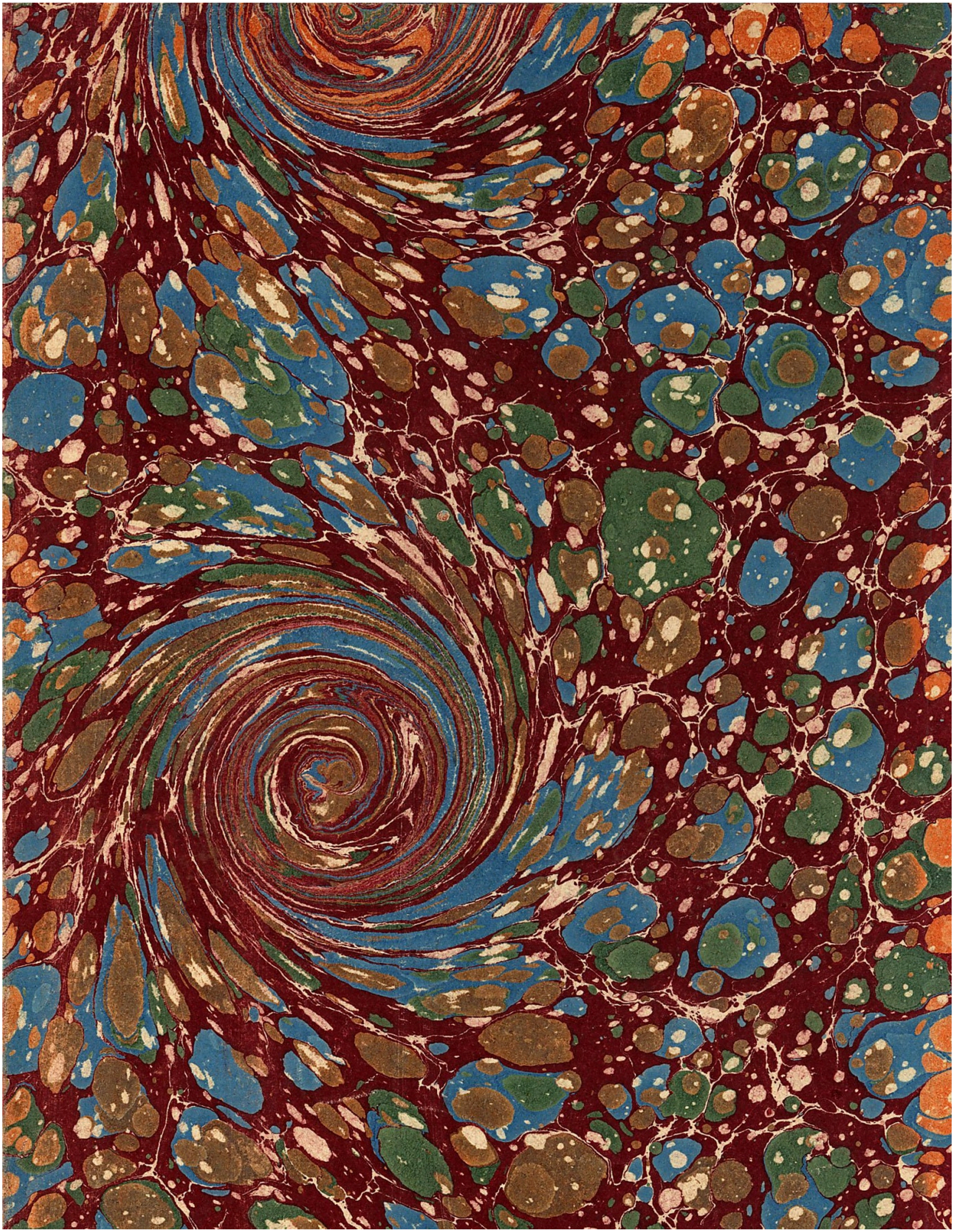
## NATHANIEL S. ROUNDS

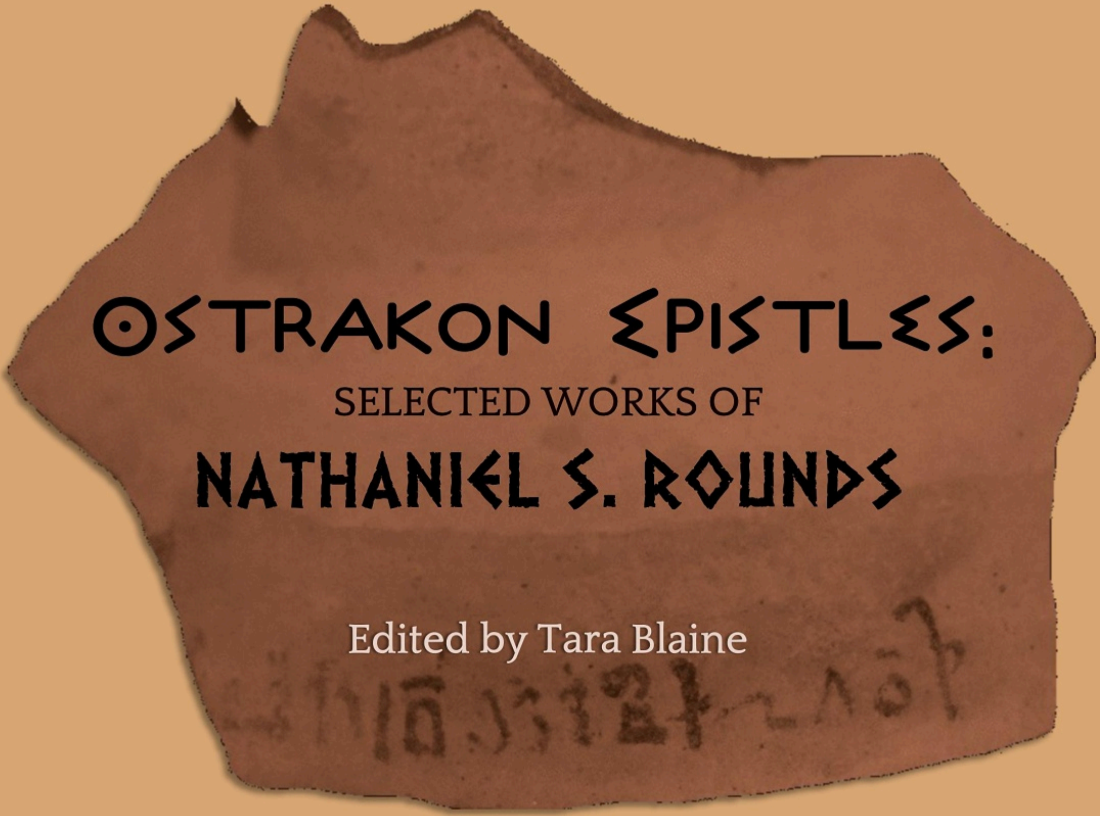
Edited by Tara Blaine

# COMPLETE COLLECTION & CHAPBOOK CHRONOLOGY

Cautionary Tales and Sundry Ballads
Sgraffito: Whiteslip Patterns from Seaside Heights
Written in New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia.
1986-2011
Shavings from the Drawknife, Libels on Nature, Crevalle Jack, Brains 'n' Eggs
Written in Florida
2009-2010
The Glass Pillow, Bread of Tears, Reproachable Optimists, Poems from Fenwick Tower, The Poetronica Scrolls, Clefts of the Rock, Because So Much Is Riding On Your Unicycle, It's a High Voltage Adventure, Meditations On Blue, Yellow and Grey, And Your Dreams Will Be Used To Sell Burgers and Cars, Rugs, Chickens and Automobiles, Dynamometer, Accordion Music For Hungry Eyes, Love or Duty, Literally Ethical Pork Belly Mixtape, Coins Between Cushions, Candy Medals of Bravery, Megamouth Shark Eats Dongpo Pork With a Spoon, Rockaballad, Deep Space Dubstep, Paintings of Robots, Things Which Are Not, Fraudulent Twinkies, Your Mysterious Tears, Enigma Variations, Asphaltum, Flower Head (Noon),One Man's Mosaic
Written in Nova Scotia
2010-2015
Nation of Nate: A Dongpo Pork Mixtape of Melancholy and Madness. Collection , Edited by Alison Ross, Published by Fowlpox Press and Clockwise Cat / Feline Nothingness Press.
2016

All other titles prior to this volume were published by Fowlpox Press.





# OSTRAKON EPISTLES:

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## NATHANIEL S. ROUNDS

Edited by Tara Blaine

Published by Fowlpox Press. Distributed through this publisher and through the Southern Collective Experience, llc, and through the assistance of Felino A. Soriano. Poems selected for this manuscript: ©MMXVII, Nathaniel S. Rounds. Forward to this edition: ©MMXVII, Tara Blaine. Layout: Paris Pâté.

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The poems in this collection were selected from previously published titles as listed, all of which have been published by Fowlpox Press: *Sgraffito: Whiteslip Patterns From Seaside Heights, Rugs, Chickens and Automobiles, Candy Medals of Bravery, Poems from Fenwick Tower, Brains 'n' Eggs, Coins Between Cushions, Accordion Music for Hungry Eyes, Clefts of the Rock, Deep Space Dubstep, The Glass Pillow, Shavings From the Drawknife, Literally Ethical Pork Belly Mixtape, One Man's Mosaic, Things Which Are Not, Because So Much Is Riding On Your Unicycle, Fraudulent Twinkies, Dynanometer, The Poetronica Scrolls, Crevalle Jack, Love or Duty, Flower Head (Noon), Your Mysterious Tears, Bread of Tears, Rockaballad, Paintings of Robots,*

*Additional attribution for poems previously published in print or online magazines is given within footnotes throughout the volume.*

Imagine Homer plucked from the shores of ancient Ionia, plopped at the counter of a truck-stop diner just off the interstate in Anytown, USA—there to live out a thousand lifetimes and sing a thousand sagas. His wine-dark sea is replaced by the endlessly unfurling highway blacktop. His epic heroes, the cast of Nobodys who stream through the cracked vinyl booths. His meter, the shuffle of dusty boots in, orders up. And his muse? A bottomless cup o' joe, ever replenished by a blue-lidded goddess and reflecting in its black surface his own bardic visage.

Thus we enter the world of Nathaniel S. Rounds. Though to call it his world ducks culpability—for this is also our world, unmistakably. Yet when we encounter it in Rounds's work, we enter a realm uncannily distorted. To read through Rounds is to view the heavens refracted by an oil-slicked mud puddle—and to recognize the discrepant reflection as the true face of Elysium. Rounds is our bard, our guide: cartographer, chronicler of characters, and sly commentator on a landscape of the absurd. The bard invokes the muse and begins to sing:

> **"This is where the brain is when the muse is at its peak / When you escape reason / In favour of (f)art"**

Rounds has over thirty-five chapbooks to his name, which creates a daunting undertaking for a new reader: where shall I start and, more concerning, will I ever emerge on the other side? Here is a sphere vast and disorienting, one that both demands and rewards close attention and a dose of nerve. This volume aims to be a distillation of that universe—one robust enough to capture the depth and breadth of Rounds's particular epistemology, but sufficiently contained to keep a reader just this side of utter discombobulation. There are many doors to open—and doors within those doors that open onto further openings. Venture through them knowing you'll eventually stumble out the back relatively intact—and equipped to wade through the dreary old world with the new set of eyes one gains from a wander through Rounds' dimension.

And so we begin this ingress into the realm of Rounds at that dim diner where Rounds-as-Homer has perched.

### Roots and routes: The poet, his places, his people

Rounds the man reveals himself haphazardly throughout his oeuvre, his identity emblazoned in the breaks, in the blanks, biography slipping in and out of view. This elision of the ego allows the lyric and the epic to meld and mingle: the epic becomes intimate, and the lyric grows to mythic proportions. When the "I" appears, his primary preoccupation is the poetic—the singing of the song about the songs, the continual dedication of the poet to his cause. This is the work of the bard: to illuminate the world, to locate himself in the shadows that give life to the light.

Some biographical crumbs, however, are a useful entry point into Rounds's work. He was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, a town of around 100,000 souls in the northern part of the state. And the dust of Wichita Falls still blows through his lines—no matter how far his address has since strayed from the place of inception. It's the kind of dust that clings to the sole and the soul—peppering his poems with a grit that lodges in the jaw.

The town's one boast is housing the "world's littlest skyscraper," and it's an apt framework for reading Rounds, for these poems are densely populated with characters at once larger than life and small as grub worms writhing in the mud. Housed in these pages is a pint-sized highrise; peep into its windows and you'll find a portrait hall of the socially surreal:

> **"Heinz Feindschaft, an unassuming chicken catcher / Of few words and fewer allies"**
>
> **"a very pregnant Temperence Neftzger / The bearded and mustached lady of Brunswick Street"**
>
> **"Mr. Prairie Tooth Timothy Hay / Standing up in the course of his Wednesday evening / Anxiety group"**
>
> **"Mabel, with herring eyes agog, pounds upon the door"**
>
> **"The fatherless, motherless aurochs / Chuck Steak Durabrand / Who came out of Nowhere / And disappeared down a crack in the sidewalk / And his adopted pig / Blind Ludwig Howdybrant"**

Scraping the small-town sky, these are lives as vast and inconsequential as the cosmos. Their absurd adventures—both dark and delightful—play out to an audience of impassive stars.

In one chapbook introduction, Rounds proposes the following:

> **"Imagine that you have an orange flavoured Popsicle™ in your hand. It is a hot day in August in the midwestern United States. You decide to drop the Popsicle on the sidewalk and turn your back on it. At what point does it cease to exist?"**

These poems are the hedge against nonexistence, for in them there is always an orange popsicle melting on the sidewalk in the summer sun, and always a bard to commemorate its demise.

Later years found Rounds roving the United States, with notable stays in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine—growing ever more coastal and frigid—finally settling (such as he ever settles) north of the border in Nova Scotia, Canada. Thus we feel the salt-spray of the sea washing the asphalt from between the teeth. And so the ever-present sense of travel and transition we find in his work—as if motion is what keeps at bay the menace of suburban complacency that always threatens to pave over the carnival sideshow, the roadside attraction, the tent-revival shouter—all so lovingly preserved in these poems.

## Cosmology of a circus tent: Creation, myth, and religion

If we are concerned at all with the origins and travels of Rounds the man, it is in service of revealing Rounds the bard. And here we must depart from the Homeric metaphor, because Rounds is conjuring a broader ontology than the epic journey can contain. Interwoven with the myriad epyllia, the invocations, the mythic renderings of the mundane, is a genesis—

the birth and rebirth of a complete cosmos. It is as if Ovid passes through Homer's truck stop and hitches a ride with Large Marge on an endless journey through the arteries of North America.

Rounds's body of work is Ovid's Metamorphoses as told by the police blotters of a hundred small-town newspapers. The poems create their own biography, history, geography, and metaphysics as one reads further and further. Rounds is engaged in the continual writing and rewriting of an origin story—of the poet, of our world, of humanity itself. Transformations, travels, the birth of death and the rebirthing into death—over and over, Rounds is both creator and chronicler of that creation:

> **"And we just entered this / Ragged scene / With the second-hand / Smoke and the gasoline / (Leaded like Lucifer who / Fathered us both) / With a hunger for words As song"**
>
> **"blood becomes a ticking time bomb / froth is fire, froth is gold / jungles bounded on all sides"**
>
> **"But the men are all gone now / And the children too / There's a crack in the storm clouds / And the trees are bent over in prayer"**
>
> **"it's like nobody ever died here, and that's the whole thing, the song just never ends"**

But to fully map Rounds's cosmology, we can't call it quits with ancient history just yet; we have to look beyond the Romans. For there's a heavy dose of Genesis in Rounds's genesis. Christian mythology conjoins with the more ancient theologies in this body of work—a collection of Western creation stories bubbling away together in a stew of self-invention. Alongside the Greek and Roman epic traditions, we find a sort of Fata Morgana of the Old Testament origin stories. Large Marge's eighteen-wheeler stops to pick up Moses and a motley crew of deuterocanonical chroniclers as it wends its way through the continent.

As the thread of the biblical weaves through Rounds's work, so does a centrality of religious conviction carry through Rounds's personal history. Early ancestors include colonial Puritan rabble-rousers Mary Dyer and Anne Marbury Hutchinson. Rounds cites as an early and important influence in his life his maternal great-grandfather, Everett Wallace Dyer. A peripatetic preacher of the Advent Christian Church, this ancestor left Rounds a legacy of spiritual seeking, reflected in Rounds's early exposure to (and influence by) Protestant, Catholic, and Bahá'í faiths from the family and neighbors who populated his early existence. But perhaps no spiritual tradition more profoundly guides Rounds than that of Jehovah's Witnesses—the religion of his mother, and the one he chose for himself at age twelve.

But Rounds isn't a religious poet; these works are not devotionals. Instead, these are poems steeped in the central concerns of both religion and myth—the creation, degradation, and redemption of humanity. Shot through his work is an exploration of how language makes and shapes reality—the world of the poems and the world of our breathing selves.

### Why a duck?: The absurd sublime

At this point, we've picked up quite a company of bards, prophets, and peddlers to represent Rounds—it is only too apt that we also stumble into the middle of the Marx Brothers' vaudeville act. After all, Rounds is a poet of excess as much as exodus, his lines a cavalcade of imagery, personalities, and exuberant language that culminate in a multi-car pileup.

Absurdity—both the delight and the menace of it—is the meat and potatoes of Rounds's blue plate special. Slinging that absurdity in such a manner as to make a meal rather than a mess is Rounds's craft. The surreal is rendered sublime in these poems through strictly disciplined lines and formal play that reinforces the existence of boundaries by pushing them to their limits.

Reading Rounds feels rather like a Marx brothers movie, and it's no surprise that Rounds counts the 1929 Marx brothers maniacal masterpiece *The Cocoanuts* as one of his two favorite films. The other is *Alias John Preston* (1955), an early Christopher Lee thriller in which a wealthy man moves to a small English town and ingratiates himself in the local social hierarchy—building the economy, earning esteem, securing the love of a high-society ingénue—only to discover that the depths of his own psyche have been hidden from himself, and he is actually a schizophrenic murderer with blood on both his hands and his money. Every Marx brothers movie contains an earnest core plot of a lovers' journey—with Groucho, Chico, and Harpo nominally abetting the action, but mostly using it as a ruse to get up to their screwy high jinks. Imagine a Marx brothers movie in which the central "serious" plot is that of Alias John Preston—a social striver with a homicidal hidden self unraveling both his mind and the lives of those around him—while the Marx brothers gleefully wreak havoc on the very idea of social conventions. Reading Rounds's oeuvre is not unlike watching such a film on a loop while buried neck-deep in stale (but liberally buttered) popcorn.

**Driven time and again off course: We embark.**

All this is, of course, merely an entry point—a place to begin our odyssey through the work of Nathaniel S. Rounds. Attentive readers of will tease out myriad themes and recurrent images that layer upon themselves to create kaleidoscopes of meaning. Throughout, though, one returns to the way in which language creates reality—and invokes the unreality of reality. With Rounds as our troubadour, we embark on the story of our own world, one in which all that is intimately familiar is at turns mythic and menacing and mayhem, and one in which the rusted-out corners of humanity glow golden.

So stop off at that dingy diner where our bard holds forth at the counter. Like every diner, this one's got a jukebox in the corner. Pop in a quarter and let the verses play us into the never-ending night.—Tara Blaine, Ed.

70,000 cochineal beetles, which you have been fed by the food industry.

**1. Sing in Me, O Mews** …..Page 16.
Incomplete Poem
Vodka
Inventory
Rhinestone Nebula Says Hello
Michael and John Get Their Flashback On
Nightjar
You Can Paint an Elephant, But You're Still Gonna See Wrinkles
Klopstock Quadriga
Valid Mover Voids Marvel
Do Not Place Saw on Stretcher
Stop the Music
Octochord (Loganberry Broken)

**2. The Conservatory of Continual Cages…..**Page 23.
Music Theory
Advanced Music Theory
Royal Red & Blue
Silence, Like a Poultice
Piano and Trumpet
The Character of Such Punishable Octopus
Swift Demise of Schwiphti
Cosmic Music

**3. Foreclosure Proceedings on a New Set of Teeth**…..Page 31.
Friday Morning, Before the Truck
Final Take
Canto Aviso (Tip Hat, Not Boat)
Frost on Edna‘s Window
Storm Tide
Feast Upon the Seated Lest They Rise to Run
Respectez L‘environnement/Not So Much Held as Strangled
Codicil
Advantages of Vertical Penmanship
A Sentenced Vintner Mutton

**4. Epyllia of Fevered Bees**…..Page 38.
Attention Horses! You Are Girl Guides. Nothing But Girl
Guides. You Think You're Rotten, But You're Not.
Sunday Book O' Bread Exposé
Gabriella in The Shade of The Wood is Fed To The Applause of The Evening
Nine Over Six (Blinds Drawn Low)
Warning: Not a Life-Saving Device
DXing to Green, Green Grass
High Performance Burger Heroes In Which A
Podiatrist Discovers a Government Plot
With a Mental Patient Who Refuses To Bathe

Calling a Tale a Leg
Make Organ Theft Yours
Lovonomical Love
Slow Death through Fermentation
Perils in the City
Dollar a Load
Nympholepsy Illustrated (of Vapours, Bile and Gaul)
Ballad of the Sylvania 6000 Hour Bulb

**5. Dramatis Personae (Midwives)**.....Page 70.

This Poem is not about the Peacock Katydid named Glue
Lunatic Sidecar (Curling Hair Outwards)
Time Note
Death Is the Enemy and Your Mother is Runner's Up
Slurred Syntax on the Third of May
You're Crazy with Nematodes
Pigeon in a Cake Tray / Tho Thea Youm Chlong
Like A Red Morn

**6. Planet in a Petri Dish (You can't make a cosmos without breaking some eggs)**.....Page 82.
Your Mysterious Tears
Multi Purpose Mounty
No Passengers past Load Line
Omelet du fromage
Alligator Weed/Zulu Cereal (Mama, Why Is the Sky Still So Dark?")
Eggs and Ambergris
Kappelmeister Cypher/Remix
Earth Variations

**7. Dramatis Personae (Orderlies)**.....Page 90.
My Bowels, My Bowels/Death of Plumpy'nut
Where Do You Want Captain Formaldehyde to Go Today?
C'est ca que j'm
Peste Nera
Opera Chronique (Vehicle for Street Talk, Old Saws and General Despondency)
It Didn't Hurt
Eddie's Rag
Harpo's Tape
Run, Peter Run
Please insert (un)common sense.
Wedded Immense Goon

**8. Polychord Atlas**.....Page 105.
Devon Talks about His Wayward Ways
567903ASDW
Don't Bring Me Down
What Free Will Gets You
Everything (and Everyone) for the Garden
Mourners (1998, 2011, Halifax)
Ground Fault Interruption (Wife, Children, Servants, All)

**9. Dramatis Personae (Pathologists)**.....Page 113.
4x5
Rain on Rain
Police Statement
Red-Handed Dial Bliss
Night Bright
Two-Stroke Sonata

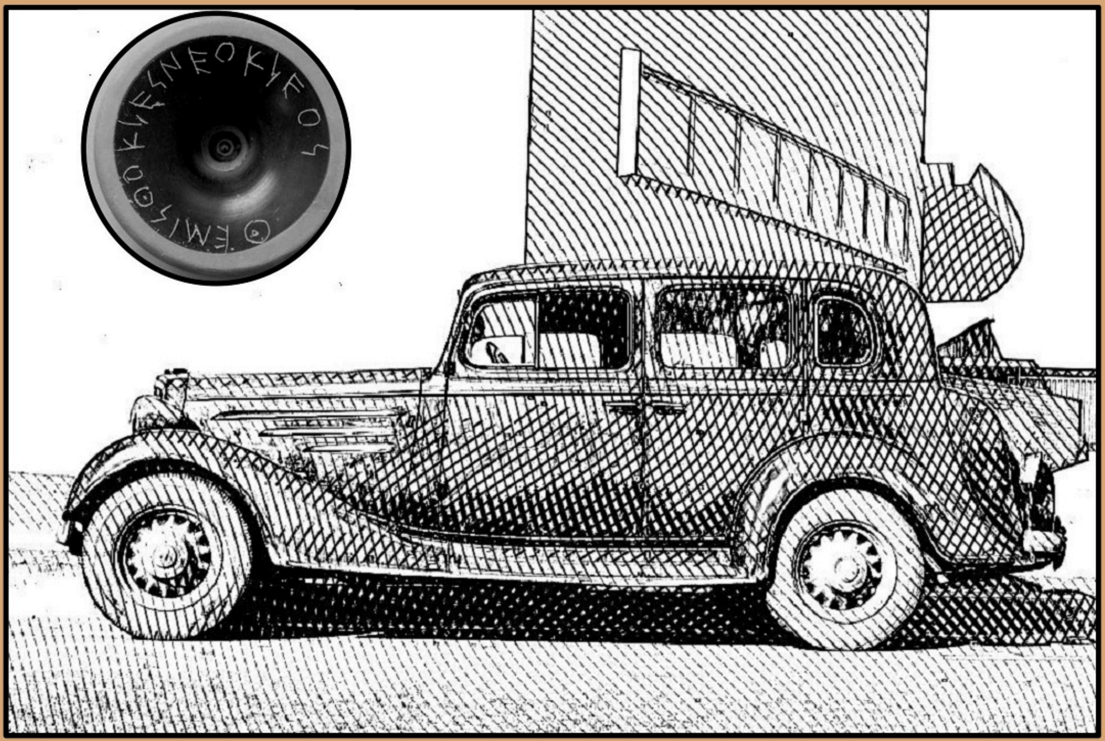
Iron and Dust
Care Package
Living Bird Loose
La Ghiottona

**10. Themistocles Draws Blood**
**(The Sea Was a Bitter Old Man)**.....Page 123.
Krekhts/Gáire
Tuesday: Note to the Entire Universe
Omnium-Gatherum: Steelworkers at Noontime
Catch a Falling Rocket by the Seaside in Long Branch, New Jersey
Book of Numbers (Waterlogged)
Sunshine Taxi and Delivery
Peanut Butter and Belly Sanchismos
104.7 F
Sun of Man

**11. Everything You Are Not**.....Page 131.
A Rich, Satirical Blow
Bearings
Tape
In Those Days We Did As They Pleased
Snow Bird Sings
NASDAQ (After Hours)

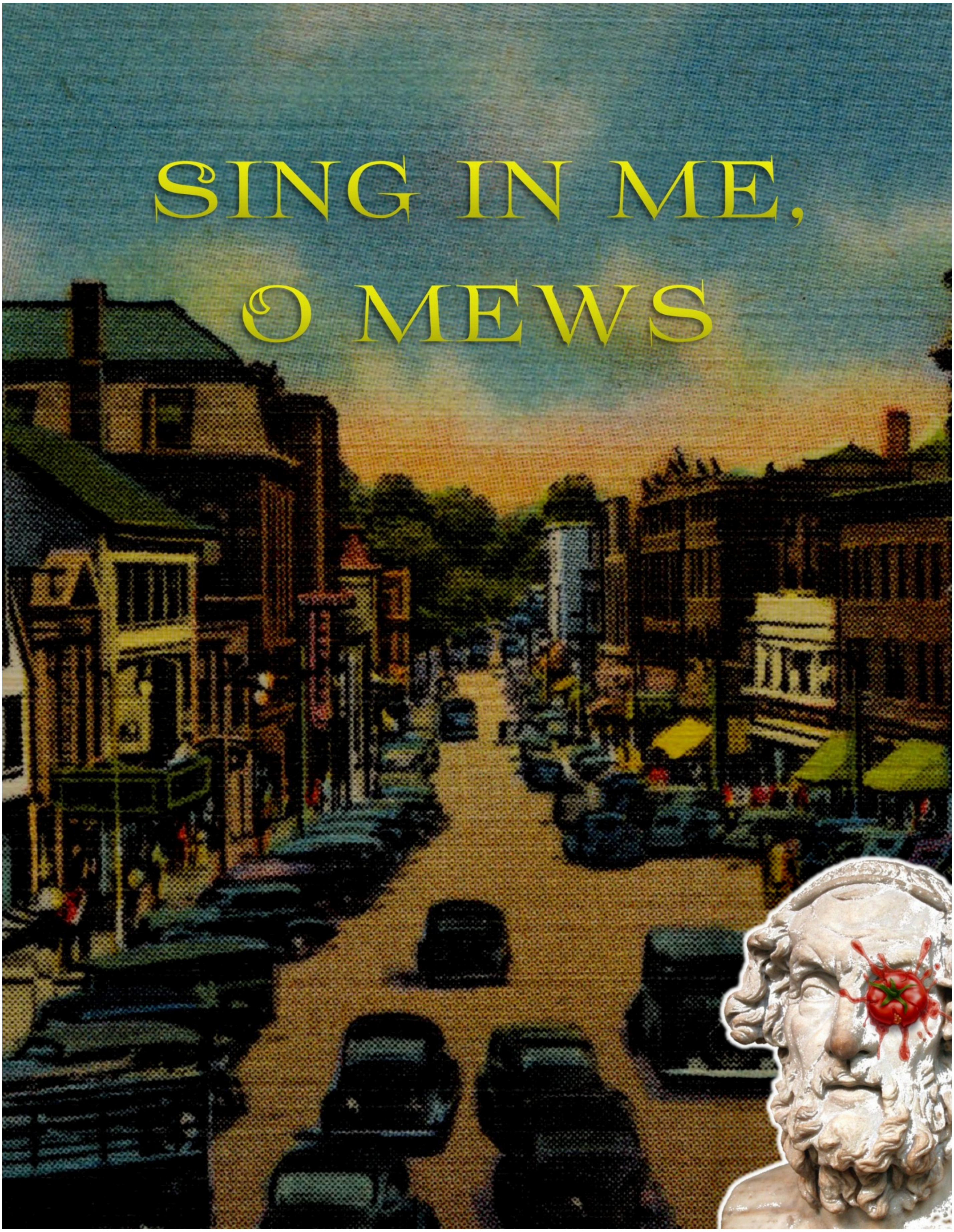
**12. Torch Songs**.....Page 136.
Courtly Love
The Life and Death of Dear John (Ritter's, Port Orange, FL)
Blitz Chess Blues
Tusk Formed From Hair
Sumptuous Tracy Lee Is My Bail Bond Lender
House of Myrrh

**13. Ask the Janitor for a Shovel**.....Page 140.
Old
Find The First Derivative
Your Albino Aquatic Frogs Are In Or One Plague in Four Voices
≈ (Approximately Equal )
Dissociative Fugue/ Lunarian’s Requiem
Dissociative Fugue No.2: Bulgarin's Savage Chicken-Fighting
Altered Granite
Birds, gold and orange glory/ nonet meets clarity pyramid
Michaux-Perreaux Steam Velocipede
Make It a Flashlight Night
You There



Etching after a photograph of a side view of 1934 Master Deluxe Sedan, 1950. CC Bourgeois at English Wikipedia. Inset: The Athenians had a particular voting technique to force individual citizens into outstanding acts of service. This ostrakon, from 482 BC and used in this voting procedure, was recovered from a Philco Refrigerator Model A-741on top of Gilley's PM Lunch, a truck-pulled diner on 175 Fleet Street , in Portsmouth, NH. The ostrakon had been stolen, smuggled to Portsmouth in the late 1800's, and later disguised as a moon pie. The original use of it persisted in its adopted home: The person who received it would have to do something spectacular, or something like it. Thus, Themistocles was a yodeling and dapper host of the annual Miss America telecast before a group of child-sized Rosicrucians worked to have him exiled. After retirement, he moved to New Jersey, Athen's enemy, where Weldon “Big Bill” Lister made him a communications specialist for Meals on Wheels. It was here, it is said, that Themistocles discovered the advantages of a "Stovebolt Six", 206 cu in (3,380 cc) six-cylinder engine when delivering meals over dirt roads. Credit: Ancient Agora Museum in Athens. By Marsyas (Own work) [CC BY-SA 2.5 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)], via Wikimedia Commons.

# SING IN ME, O MEWS



## Incomplete Poem

Chapbook no.12 was a stillborn son
consumed in the fire of a godless
machine which took down with it
twenty-five poems, which will
never see the light of day.

Some of them were
mongrels, scoundrels all,
a shy slip of moment,
toddler's bath water
splash--

## Vodka

Tolstoy, I adore your company
But there are times when
I think that good wine of good vintage
Selected for its single bottle offering
Is better than pouring
Fevered intoxication over grain in the table’s surface
For highlighted detail and accentuation

I can’t cut through your sulfur and
God-like thump of boot
Over dry earth praying for rain
And that is why I despise
Clear deception through hammer on the head
Water gone evil
Through the humble potato and its alchemy
I need your summation without aftermath

No trap will interrupt your walk
Through the forest of thought and history
Through the social botany lesson
Through the lecture and
Genesis and Exodus of Man
And woman left forgotten and betrayed
Like a matryoshka doll birthing its own fears

## Inventory

I've got a hundred poems
in a dealer's gallery,
Gathering dust

I've got a thousand songs
in a jeweler's room,
waiting to be sized

I've got a newborn boy,
asleep in my arms,
granting me a fine return
on a modest investment

## Rhinestone Nebula Says Hello

Sweet Davidic harmonica moon tide,
Abihu fans the galaxy's reflection
on the water,
wins your unswerving devotion
at the tractor pull, pours out his heart
into your cereal bowl.

Sweet Davidic harmonica moon tide,
your beauty is made immortal
in a broad cloth print,
sold by the yard
for robes and sleepwear.

### Michael and John Get Their Flashback On

Two kids play in the same
Puddle
Puddle has gasoline
Rainbow sheen
We have welfare rags and
Unselfconsciousness
We have God as Dad
We have crossing guard as
Shelter
We have two different
Mothers
Who ate penny candy
Between hunger sandwiches
While they carried us in
Their bellies
Mary and Liz
And we just entered this
Ragged scene
With the second-hand
Smoke and the gasoline
(Leaded like
Lucifer who
Fathered us both)
With a hunger for words
As song

### Nightjar[1]

The Nightjar's eyes are ravenous
For car wrecks and sideshows
Or
The spectacle of writhing trees
With gold leaves
Pulling their short roots from the ground
To drown themselves in merlot in posh cafes
Well past closing time Bark going blotchy and falling off
Bugs of every description eating them alive
The nightjar sticks a quarter into a coin-op TV
Down at the bus terminal

He watches the black and white puppetry
Of a porcupine playing a game of hazard

---

[1] *Published in Whisper, Red Fez* and *The Tower Journal*

With a pelican
While throwing dice for both

The porcupine says
His best teachers taught outside the confinement of schools
He recalls an old RKO musical dancer
A retired social studies professor
And an Irish grandmother
They all gave him lessons of lasting value

*Unlike those rompishly caustical snobs*
*At St. Mary's* he says
*They were a miserable lot*
*They drained a youngster's heart of life*
*And tied his brains in knots*

### You Can Paint an Elephant, But You're Still Gonna See Wrinkles

1. Consonance sweepers
Bring out the hypocritical oath
In the many.
I asked the Baum of Gilead,
"What's your theosophy?"
He cried as he replied:
"Though it may sound hollow I swear by Apollo
That my dreams are screams in emerald green
Such as the world has never seen.
It makes you wonder where you've been.
Still,
No one takes them…seriously."

2. I am trying to be kind to
The rivers in my mind
Although the rivers aren't that very kind to me.
They catch me in the undertow
And tell that they told me so
And that redemption is the missing key.

3. Lil misshapen lump of melancholy
Says that on this side of Armageddon,
"Luscious lemon pudding cake
Seems sadly out-of-reach.
Might Settle for a 4 lb bucket of
Marbled corned beef brisket,
A geisha girl and a biscuit."

4. Cockalorum's beard found a kitchen midden
Of seashells and broken, dirty dishes.

The beard's conclusion:
"Death sparks death sparks Sun, Sun…"
This is where you get unbuckled and let some other kid ride.
Tsum vider zeen….

## Klopstock Quadriga

The cheese in the harbour is made from the milk of
Tired clouds squeezed by high winds and circumstance,
Says Old Man Klopstock
He rides his fingers over
Folds of holes in winter pockets
Looking for a door to escape
Down there
Where cold, wounded thigh meets
Death shroud of Charlemagne
The ecclesiastical meets the fantastical
Klopstock slips into his own wound
But before his final departure
Tips his wig to suggest that you
Dig a hole in the water
And bury your tears at sea
Print a picture of your shadow
To prove you come by darkness
Honestly

## Valid Mover Voids Marvel

Coyly perverse hogs
Use reverse psychology
To dredge up the ideals
Of your mother and father
And serve them to you as
Photographs of important
Ritual
To be re-enacted
At tri-quarterly meetings
Of the mind when drenched
With dishwater
And soggy echoes of mod revival
It's Dad's pair of shades
Used for (a)voiding
Blindness
From an old sun

## Do Not Place Saw on Stretcher

I'm sorry our youngest, cruellest child
Scratched your eye last November
And that ever since then
Your eye likes to declare its perennial anger
By scabbing and weeping.
I'm glad that after recent treatment
You could still spy that bald eagle
At the corner of Middle Dyke and Bains.
However,
Your eyesight is still wanting.
I was that bald eagle
At the corner of Middle Dyke and Bains.

## Stop the Music

If the dead are coughing
While a sparrow tears curtains
With high notes and disdain
Will they be neglected in the resurrection
Or will they be denied a drink
Of cool water

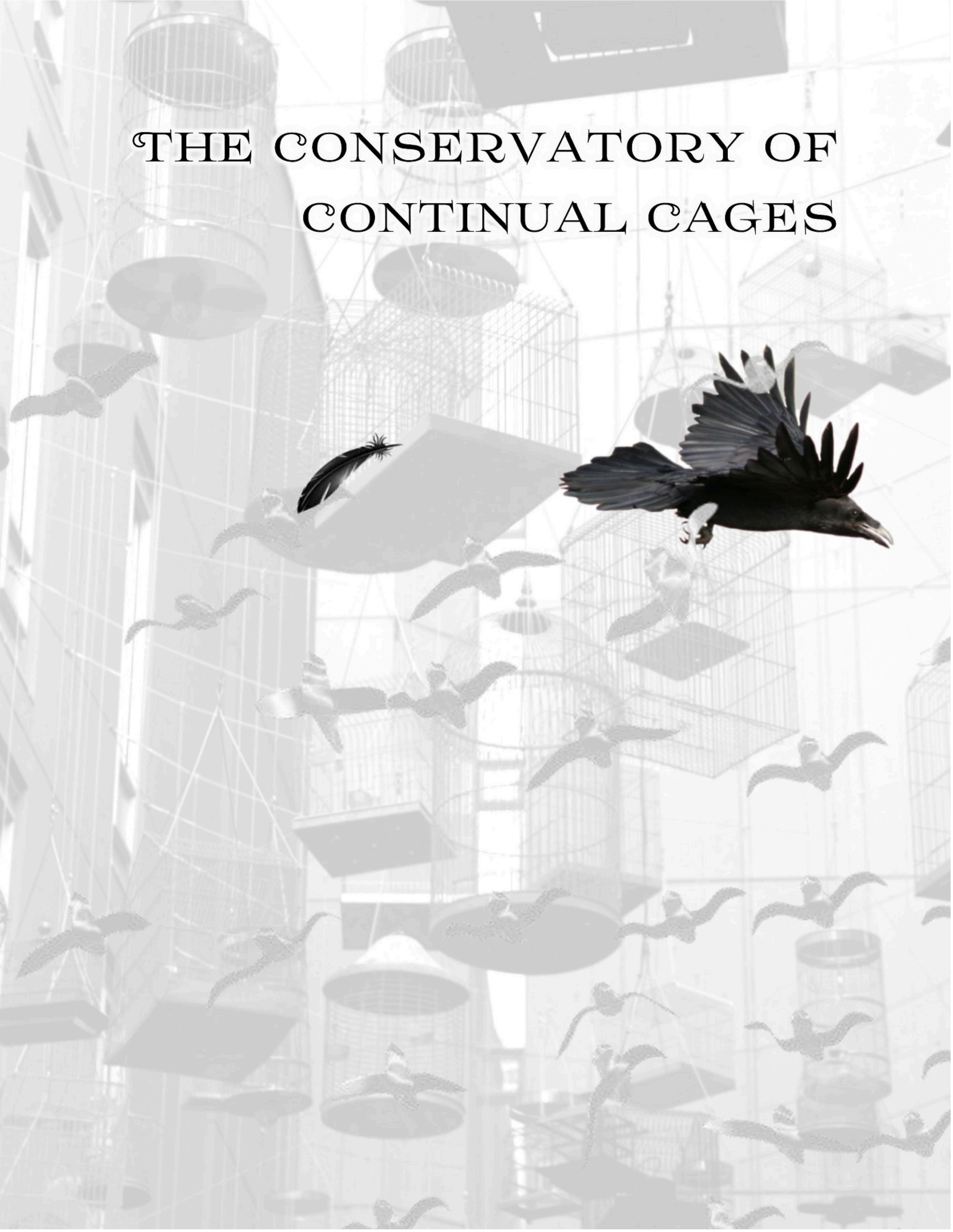
Or will the curtain fall
In a furrow of diamond-cut shellac
With the label clawed away
And a hole in place of a heart
?

## Octochord (Loganberry Broken)

With thanks to Benjamin Wallace Tarbell

Both courageous and content are the five nullified architects of industrial Milwaukee, home to Azerbaijan donkeys, the architect and ass jammed into irrational boxes and then Freud-washed and unleashed, their surrealist manifesto proclaimed by saxophones at noonday, vomiting fluorescent apology to my spilled intestines as a broken record : "Here lies the autograph of a minor vaudeville star, his opening night at the Apollo filled with stale jokes and chatter, every seat occupied by a former lover, the room an open wound taken by the river of regret. His heart holds a road that spills into a tar pit. The road has been named twice."

# THE CONSERVATORY OF CONTINUAL CAGES



## Music Theory

Imagine a piano.

## Advanced Music Theory

Imagine two pianos.

## Royal Red & Blue

Professor Longhair stuck some walrus tusks in the holes where the
Piano keys were pulled
From
You know, where the dreams seep out/and he got two other
Pianos and some secret clones/and now you should hear them
It's a
Concerto from Mozart in dream warrior triplicate
Womb-to-womb-to
Home-brew-birth

## Silence, Like a Poultice

Old Iron Toes is giving the ivories a beating
Big, bad foot of formidable proportions
Playing Chopin's nocturne in C# minor
Pink kerchief absorbing his perspiration
If not the stench of his callused physiognomy
He's like a power hammer in an infant's nursery
Chopping Chopin on the butcher's block

Then a little girl named Natalia taps Old Iron Toes
And suggests he take a breather
And in his welcomed and long-overdue departure
Resumes the nocturne with sparkling facility
Here in the lobby of a tenement house
Where the rats and collection agents
Find easy spoil

Necessity never made a good bargain
But she makes great banana waffles
With fresh strawberries and whipped cream

Her eighth floor apartment is a curiosity shop
Snake bite serums and dried seahorses

A library containing a Gutenberg bible
And Kerouac's letters to Ferlinghetti
And underneath the kitchen counter
Equipment for a pirate radio station
The microphones for which are placed behind a marble table
At which a neighbor's two children, Loruhamah and Loammi
Build villages on a board game
Stopping only for banana waffles and bathroom breaks

They've been at it for months now
Saying nothing, the silence broadcast
And appreciated on both sides of the Atlantic
Interrupted now and again
By the hammering of an unfortunate piano
In the lobby seven floors below

We return to Necessity, the generous, cross-eyed beauty
As she sails across the narrow hallway from her door
To the exit at the south end
In a flax, pintuck dress
Her hand brandishing a wasp nest on a torn branch

She steps into an elevator
Joining a rat and a collection agent
Scaring them into silence
And by the time they reach the basement parking lot
Into models of self abnegation
They wave shyly with their straw boaters
As she exits in a blaze of thunder

### Piano and Trumpet[2]

There's an old elephant
Wheezing song like a gummed-up harmonica
Outside the GUNS and PIANOS
BUY-SELL-TRADE
They call him Mephibosheth
Used to perform in a small circus
He was injured in transit
Made him nervous from chronic pain
He had already been a teenage hypochondriac
He read medical journals with a flashlight
Under the covers
Came across a lovely article about

---

[2] Published in Misfits' Miscellany. Luis Cuahtemoc Berriozabal informed editor Philip Vermaas that he found this poem excellent. No elephant, however, shared his opinion on the poem.

Behavioural Management of Hypochondriasis
And it stuck with him
Like everything did

After the transport truck hit his left side
He tried to divert himself by listening to Dmitri
Shostakovich but
The man was incomprehensible
So he listened to his music instead
They sat there in the Brattleboro retreat
Feet sharing tub water with torpedo fish
A phonograph playing a nice little waltz
In a Yiddish style
Simmering on the turntable like mother's soup
Ladled out with equal amount of love and passive aggression

Mephibosheth and Dmitri had this conversation
The music was their interpreter
They would sneak into the retreat tower
With a keyboard and Mephibo's trunk-as-trump'
Play some American-Russian patchwork of
Melancholy
Against the rants written on the stone walls
Piano and trumpet weeping and laughing
Against and in harmony with:

*Teachers are anointed censors and controllers*
*Dispensers of secular catechism*
*Turning bright minds into toiling hands*
*Drawing the blind on God's infinite sunshine*

Upon their discharge
They zigzagged around the country side
The Connecticut River their companion
Windows rolled down as the autumn leaves fell
Like confetti over them

Red
Red
Red
And orange like a sunset

And you may say that Dmitri was never there
But his thoughts and his music are invested
In the old elephant's memory
And he blows them out
And draws them back in
Drawing the curious from passersby

## The Character of Such Punishable Octopus

From the top floor of the three storey
Tenement house
Sealing confessions of light with bitumen
Once captured by glass eyes looking over
Patios
Comes this unstoppable chariot
This 1958 Ford Nucleon
Driven madly by a working class poet
Hiding in the city in plain sight
Dancing upon her adversaries

In conclusion
While her husband is out on a solitary walk
Mrs. Helena Angelika Podsednik
The Victoria Crowned Pigeon from Dvůr
Králové Zoo
Rolls pie dough made from nine or ten cups
of fine flour
(Minus oil and frankincense)
With sweaty thrusts of a beer bottle
(Absent its original Kozel Černý
And over the last six months
Holding a paper entitled A Sociocultural
Analysis of a Midwestern American Flea
Market)
But none of this is going well

Helena mumbles in a rasp while rolling and
Rolling:
“We move in after telling management office
That our old apartment was much too noisy.”

*Roll, roll, roll, roll*

“The lady smiles and says nothing
About 18 months restoring parking lot
Directly under new apartment.
She knew everything and not a word of it.”

*Roll, roll, roll, roll*

“And that first night and forever,
The mice and their problems.
Little dark mice are constant, constant…”

*A cutting of the dough into wonderful braids*
*Placed over the pie*

"And into the cupboards and my lungs close
Down
And my nerves all break into slices…"

*The oven's maw opens and swallows the pie*

"And drunk students climbing balcony and
Breaking flowers
And chairs and drilling, drilling for
Renovation initiative."

*This saltbox house is an embittered mother*
*Hiding secrets in linden blossoms*
*Printed on pitch-black paper*
*Glued to plaster walls*
*But by night*
*It will become a camera obscura*
*Floating by way of hot air balloon*
*To Les Gras*
*Where it shall preserve images of unhurried*
*Leisure*

Two giant frogs return to the balcony
They each have infinite legs
Of female, human proportion
In Lucite® high heel shoes
They're like faded sideshow attractions
Who were coerced into dancing for rubles

One frog sits at one end of the balcony
And faces the other
Their glances serving as conversation
And their solemn expressions as prayer

Helena smiles and nods at them
Then chops their legs off with a cleaver
She sticks them in a pot of salty water
And as their legs writhe and kick at the air
The frogs grow new limbs
Which they fold one over the other
Toes wiggling and wanting to slip into
Shoes and to walk or to dance
But not to be here

Nobody wants to be here
Not the two frogs
Not Mrs. Helena Angelika Podsednik
Not Mr. Božidar Tomáš Podsednik
A Temminck's Tragopan and her husband of

Eight years
Not her son from her first marriage, Otmar
Who worked for five minutes at Le studio
Harcourt
And then started teaching les grandes dames
Ballroom tango
At a crumbling studio in Le Marais
And certainly not avant-garde composer Yuriy
Platon Zolnerowich
The octopus with the persecution complex
And the sinus headache
Who, from the Podsednik's bathroom toilet
Writes music
Which he performs with an ensemble of his
Own invention:
Three atomic clocks of brushed aluminum, who
simply keep time
Against a baby doll who cries "mamochka"

Zolnerowich plays the Kora
A West African, 21-string bridge-harp
Using the Double-Phrygian Hexatonic scale
And a single snare for some bebop beats
Against the wailing and cold, silent
Perfection of time
Underneath the red glow of a darkroom
Safelight

After a visit to the bathroom
Guests who visit the Podsedniks seldom
Linger
With the exception of a financial advisor
Who muttered about using the Gann square of
Nine
Until Zolnerowich injected him with a
Neurotoxin
After which the advisor had little advice to
Offer

The frogs' legs have succumbed
To the ocean's roar
The master of ceremonies
Lifts them from the pot
And throws them into a hissing skillet
The passive legs and bacon grease
Make polite applause
While Mr. Podsednik, returning from his
morning walk
Opens the door onto this domestic scene

And upon seeing his wife all sweaty while
Setting the table
Fluffs out his feathers and dances for her

## Swift Demise of Schwiphti

'Round Midnight at Minton's, DJ Kool Joe Keiberth has got his wheels of steel going and he's milking the Wagner LP of Tristan und Isolde to death, dumping samples over samples of samples and turning the whole thing into a fat, hissy sprawl of a soul/hip hop aria and then, right there on the stage, he stumbles backward and doesn't jump up again, and at first no one really gets that the DJ is dead in the house, I mean, this is exactly like his bud Felix did a while back scratching the same wax. So they drag the guy off the stage and this other DJ with a pork pie hat and shades gets up out of nowhere and starts tearing up the club with Schuller's *Where the World Ends* and adding bits of discordant piano—Jazz on orchestral fathered by jazz and it's like nobody ever died here, and that's the whole thing, the song just never ends.

## Cosmic Music[3]

Cloud above is not a cumulus cloud
And if you said cumulonimbus
You'd be wrong
You just have to hear it thunder
It's a John Coltrane cloud
He's pouring a bowl of resolution
Over the empty streets
Thirsty for starlight

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[3] Published in *The Blue Hour*

# FORECLOSURE PROCEEDINGS ON A NEW SET OF TEETH

## Friday Morning, Before the Truck

Everybody up and down the street wants to stop and look at my garbage
Clear bag of garbage
Little things in there curling up or broken or worn out and done with
Little old man churlish mother of two trailer park owner with the beer belly
They all stop and stoop over, look over my garbage
Look up at me sitting there on the porch step with the beer in my hand
Melting into sleep after working all night
They have to figure out how I used the things that are now garbage
How they relate to me and me to them
Maybe they have nicer garbage
Or things with the secrets wrapped in cores or layers or folds or pockets
They want to make sure to reveal less but don't care to guess
But would far rather see what kind of garbage makes up me

## Final Take

I'm not the hero
in this real life drama
I'm in the background
walking left to right
I't won't pay the bills
this filling the top frame
But I hear the director
and swallow the pain
My soul's been foreclosed
but the loan sharks still call
And they sing like a romance
and howl like the wind
and bury your children
in roses and lead
Someday I'll set sail
on a sloop made from prayer's hands
and the sun will shake clouds
of their thunder and rain

## Canto Aviso (Tip Hat, Not Boat)

The storm petrel is
Skywriting sonnets
In storm's eye nuclei
It's raining calla lilies
In Kent's Kingdom
While
Streaks of lightning
Reveal before shrieking

Nonobjective narration
For presupposed realities
I offer no valid explanation
But without hesitation
Suggest that were you to fashion a skirt from a pillowcase
I'd be glad to sleep on your lap

### Frost on Edna‘s Window

It‘s all about choices
I choose to furnish the home of my youth
With old poems and new songs
And to nod off in my rocker
As the sunset dies
And then
Wake up to dream time
Where
We drop anchor in time streaks of stars
Roller skating Andromeda sky

### Storm Tide

Chasing a fire fleet ambulance
You are inside the chariot with flashing lights
I've got your particulars in an attaché case
Dynamometer in the trunk of my car
I will check both you and the ambulance at the tugboat dockyard
See if your blood and oil type match
It's nice to see flesh and metal jump over the broom
The palm-bearing multitude will turn away
Walk purposely down the narrow street
And while the flood waters crush the sea wall and
Toss tugboats into living rooms
I'll watch from the roof top,
Carving little wooden houses from cottonwood

### Feast Upon the Seated Lest They Rise to Run

I'm not wingman for the flea circus boss
I'm gonna crawl up a tree
Gonna pull out the stops
Wave down clouds for chariot rides
And I shall descend upon your porch steps
So you may flee when I knock
And enquire thereupon
Whether your mind gets a kick out of fireworks
And you may eagerly digress and state broadly

That your relatives are either sinners or critics
Thankfully, I don't have to worry about friends
At night I
Dip my sword in mineral spirits
I've painted what I have to say
But I am still your census taker and have been asked to ask
Does your brain watch its own can-can?
Mine has
And I have
Surrendered my health to spare the dandy's life
Style
Recently
I swapped my
Shoes for shackles in a big box
Store
But wait
There's more
Red ants are the new romantics
I've painted words with a sharp sword
And lodged them in a traveling nest of
Locusts so that they will spread with a vengeance
When my own dies out
Red ants bite their way through the crowds at the club
The nest is ready and ripe
Red ants
Bight their way to the top
Like a candy apple with a bomb inside
And the FCC wants you to know
That this poet's scheme must not cause
Harmful interference
And the FDA states that this poet's words
Provide iodide, a necessary nutrient
And I would like to ask that my grave be marked
By an auto passenger‘s side door
So that you may have somewhere to be taken and to go

## Respectez L‘environnement / Not So Much Held as Strangled

It may be winter
But then
It could be unheralded spring
And there‘s a new army of loud babies
Who are akin to
Snow blowers and lawn mowers
So much oil to
So much gas

Hand holds dark snow globe dotted with
Taxi light streaks
And
Decaffeinated hockey
Forgotten fuzz box glitch of screamed anthems
Funded by Caesar‘s taxes
And salt spread over mountainous snow

Old woman at coffee shop‘s wall of windows
Frets over rain turned into water fall
Song birds shriek music on the cusp of heart break

We attempt to sail a boat minus bottom
First officer plugs hole with vitamin D
And pink slips
I am left holding the bag
Which may or may not contain
1 donut*1muffin*1 bagel*
Or
2 tea biscuits

I wish to rekindle the home of my youth
Furnish my bedroom
With old prayers and
New poems
Nod off in my granddad‘s rocker
As the sunset dies
And then
Wake up to dreamy weather
Where we can
Drop anchor in the Andromeda galaxy
Despite crooked heart and head
Busting through rotted floor boards in
A popped balloon frame architecture
And a fuse box gone muddy brown with rust

## Codicil

Naturally I shall refrain
From speaking on subjects that unlock
Through calculated teeth in wheels
The chain of command
The state chief‘s brutal reprimand
The imbecilic kiss of steel
That meets with blood
And ends with shameful gasps of false confession
Castigating caution with a blotch of mud
Following weak back-boned inclination

To dissuade the warmonger‘s threat
To abet the beaten
With progeny sweetened
Over coals blown to full heat of the infernal
Thus satisfying the moment
At the cost of the eternal
Splintering hindrance
Shattering innocence
Loosening the skirt strings
At the expense of the forgotten
Cottoning sound judgment honored on high
For the child‘s hand filled
Full of fool‘s stuffs nigh

### Advantages of Vertical Penmanship

1.

Resumed writing after a month‘s absence upon discovering a sheaf of loose leaf paper with a mouse turd on it. My reasoning: Can‘t do much worse than the mouse. So I wrote out a promissory note to the following effect:

*On July 2nd next I promise to pay Master Mouse*
*One Dollar value received.*

2.

Walked past the front door window and saw a girl with (2) pussy willow branches and (2) charcoal eyes and heard (2) statements through cracked, paned glass. Her first statement was her name (Molly) and the second was a request to meet my children. Molly, my (2) sons and (1) daughter destroyed the front yard with croquet mallets. I placed the (2) pussy willow branches in a mason jar and set the hard scrabble assortment on a window overlooking (1) blueberry field.

3.

Against a dirt road skirted obliquely…

Attila the Hun looked up from his darning. Would little Joe be back before nightfall? Attila loved surprises so! Against a dirt road skirted obliquely with bold, green grass…

“Y‘know,” said little Joe, wiping milk from his lips with his tattered sleeve, “y‘get nuff of them bills from the mailman, y‘kin make yerself a fine little fire.”

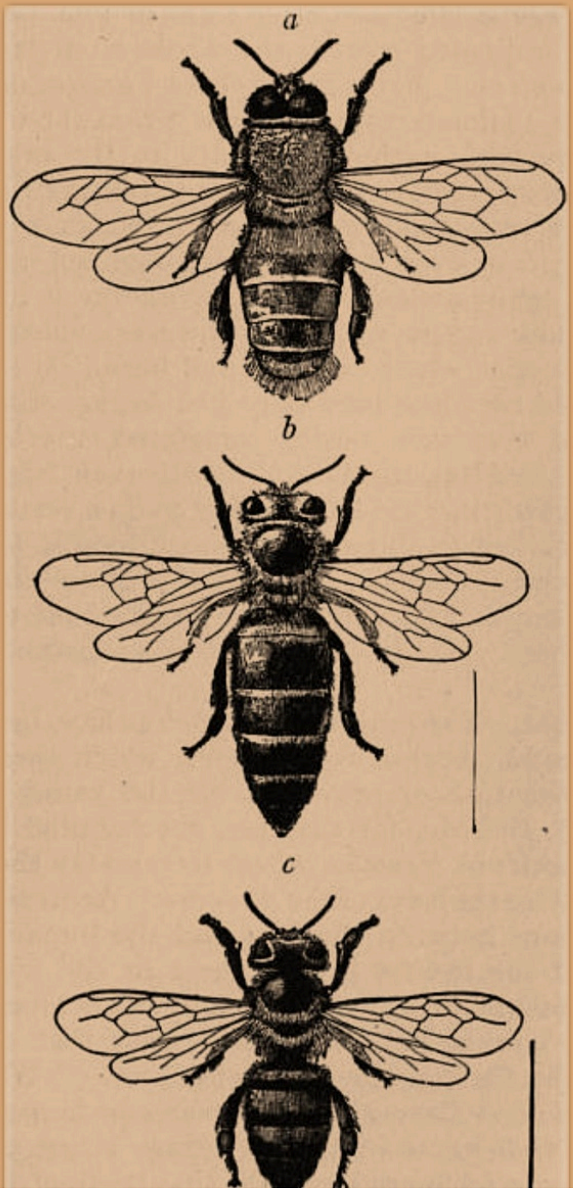
Against a dirt road skirted obliquely with bold, green grass
I‘ve swapped a busted Ford truck
For a neglected wood pile and the loan of a splitter.

Wind screams with an appalling rasp
But compensates by playing bouncer to so many
Cloudbursts.

### A Sentenced Vintner Mutton

I turned a few pages of a book
*Adventures in Contentment*
A book about the glories of the country life
By a big city author and political biographer
And it was easy to dream
But dreams don't feed the fire
So I fed the book to the fire
And I watched this little phrase curl up in the flames
"I will be as broad as the earth. I will not be limited"
And then I knew that I should get some bigger books
To burn and that no lack of wood or sentimentality
Would thwart me from keeping warm

# EPYLLIA OF FEVERED BEES



## Attention Horses! You Are Girl Guides. Nothing But Girl Guides. You Think You're Rotten, But You're Not.

We are the fuzzy-felt buoys. We are here to protect you from the red pencil crayon of Jackie Chan. Oh, yes, you can get away from me, there is a chance that you can chat for free, and you are my tears, but you won't change the way I slap wallpaper paste onto my sponge finger. Why isn't my tiger spooky?

Your mother was a grapefruit and your father smelled of hands. Bus tickets of the world: Throw buckets of whitewash over gnus and pump flip-flops! I've never been semi-human. How dare you go badger-baiting war wounds to attract raccoons and gorillas! Never sell your soul to a temporal warp!

Ten fictional teacups, hanging on the Bunsen burner; ten fictional teacups, hanging on the Bunsen burner; and if one fictional teacup should accidentally smoke a pencil sharpener then I'm a level 5 Kitchen sink in a boyfriend-world! I've got a magic Volvo and everything!

Apparently, many anteaters will make florin-gold keys from bandages... Early to remix dilettantes, early to exchange UHT milk cartons for shopping baskets, makes a man dead, cement mixer-digesting and robotic. Which of the following might shrink an eggplant? (A.) A sunflower. (B.) An apple pie. (C.) A ham and cheese omelette. (D.) A porridge bowl.

I'm afraid I have to go barter-shopping with my television.

## Sunday Book O' Bread Exposé[4]

1. Gray cloud day
In mid-November.
Elkosh, New Hampshire,
Grafton County.
First snow.
In the country outskirts,
Northern Shrike
impales a field mouse
to a barbed wire fence.

Blighted potatoes are left to
rot,
falled calf left
on the roadside,
awaiting conversion
into potted meat mystery.
In town, within a remodeled woolens factory,
a paraprofessional social worker

---

[4] Published in *Osprey Journal*

is chained to his cubicle,
deprived
of pump room chicken hash,
tickets to the zoo,
pants in a can,
free Sunday parking.

Enraged poor help themselves
to vending machine potato salad,
gallon jugs of spring water,
public bathroom toilet paper,
galoshes drying by the door.

Outside,
station wagon parts melting snow
and
Wild Man Weikko (mis)directs traffic.
He tells no one in particular:
"I keep various gauges of
miniature train track in
my jacket pocket
in case we need to build a bridge
to discern what the face in
the suit just jawed.
Then I drive the junk load of jargon
to my freight box home, and
let it set awhile."

By late evening the Monarch Butterfly Buffet's
neon sign succumbs to
failure, "Monarch" flickering
blue-violet,
and the words "Buffet"
and
"Home of Polynesian, Chinese, Italian
and American Cuisine" cowering under a
veil of darkness.

Inside:
Singing cowboys Meredith, Francis and Shannon Peerless,
dressed in Bondstreet Deluxe
Carlsbad style hats
with polka dot shirts
and
denim coveralls,
commiserate with Doctor Flügelmuttern
over crab Rangoon and
coconut chicken, Hawaiian pizza slices
and Italian ices.

They share a kinetic vibe
bent low under pressure
from a genetic dinosaur
breathing depression and self-angst,
culminating in scar tissue
walling up their urinary tracts. Hard
to sing "Happy Trails"
when you have to pee--
but can't.

Meredith is seeing Marsha,
a Princess from Nieue,
"the rock of Polynesia"
and full time waitress at
the Butterfly.

Their courtship was
founded upon soft ground.
Marsha has an identical twin,
also named Marsha, and a mother
from whom their mold was cast,
and after whom they are both named.

All three work full time at the butterfly.

Only meal receipts betray their identities:
The matriarch appears as "Marsha 297".
Meredith is in love with Marsha 298. Her
sister is Marsha 299.

On Friday evenings,
Meredith takes Marsha
to York's Wild Kingdom
in his rusted Checker aerobus,
to feed Linda the elephant maraschino
cherries and eggplant.

Meredith does not resemble his brothers.
He is dark complexioned
and sports a grease pencil
unibrow.

Francis is concerned about his best friend
Mihaly, defeated by
epilepsy and schizophrenia,
strapped to the roof rack of his mother's
'72 Datsun 510 station wagon,
shaking his giggle head candy pop.

His mother sports an eye patch,
evidence of a painful encounter
with a retractable clothes iron cord.
Certain men find her mysterious,
exotic
even.

Mihaly is restricted from driving,
and has been so
since he backed into a junior high school
marching band
while wearing nothing but a Zorro mask
and hockey cup while behind the wheel of a
stolen squad car.

Shannon eats bread twist ties.

Doctor Flügelmuttern pouts and sits in his
riding jacket and breeches. He keeps his upturned,
hand-woven Panama hat as a bed for his
spotted pet rabbit.
The rabbit was stuffed eight years ago,
its vacant stare sealed into permanency.

Out on the street between the Butterfly
and the fire department,
a hard tack ball of spunk
named Nahum Heinneker
rolls a Velveeta tree slice
through his Underwood
and boldly proclaims
that "mimes don't deliver singing telegrams,
and I don't like to dance,
but I'll gladly seize hold of your
flannel countenance
and elevate it in my life's tome."

Spectator Micah Kelsea
adds this addendum:

"For starters,
don't
meander down Slanderous Road.
There, they slop pigs with rotten words
mashed into pulp with a lead pipe,
stirred in the blood of martyrs."

Nahum has a face
like a spiked melon,

the beak of a lorikeet, and
a toothpick that circles his lower lip
like the first dorsal of a
hungry shark.
The dorsal drops down.
Up foam these words:

"Fui , fuisti.
Fui, fuimus.
Fui, el estreñimiento.
Fui, l'epistassi."

Heading home from the Laundromat,
kit bag
over his shoulder, retired railroad engineer
Amos Goodwill mumbles through his cowcatcher
mustache:
"I'm returning to my old-fool self,
turkey Polska kielbasa brain caving in
on itself, these thoughts forming a stone
buried under a heap of stones. Granddaughter sings
a quarter tone note over breakfast
cereal intangibles
scattered over checkered linoleum.
Time to break bread over a new day,
cough up a strategy."

Back in the country side,
the Gibbs farm house is eaten up by alders.
The ground is barren under the apple tree,
mother of August Whites. The house
is a hundred holes for fevered bees,
transforming horse hair and plaster
into honeycomb.

Sunday evening sky knows all this,
yet says nothing.

## Gabriella in The shade of The Wood is Fed To The Applause of The Evening[5]

1.
I found you looking at the tatty canvas
You brought it to the counter
I surmised without giving you the stare-down
That you were in your fifties
Better preserved than Lenin
Simple black dress
Blond hair not frizzed out from decades of dyeing
You must have been born with the gold
And not in any hurry to relinquish it in favour of silver
The canvas was a mess

An abstract oil called Babi Yar/Schrödinger's Cat

Painted on Russian linen stretched over a bone frame
I showed you the odd little treasure tucked between frame slat and linen
A folded sheet of foolscap with typewritten story
With a 75 dpi halftone taken from a *Pears' Shilling Cyclopaedia*
Of various types of vermin

It tells a story of a brave woman
Named Gabriella Eventide
She was left a small pension by her husband
A farmer who had the misfortune of being trapped beneath his tractor
Mr. Orton Eventide was brave enough
To write a cursory will on the underside of the tractor's fender
Thereupon Gabriella used her small income to assist women in distress

In this particular story
Gabriella comes to the aid of the five daughters of Zelophehad
Who were desperately trying to escape gigantic bed bugs
Dressed in regency pumps and powdered wigs
As they descended a wooden ladder
Connecting tenement buildings to sky

And as I paraphrased the words you read it and nodded
And murmur words like Ingrid Bergman
And send me into dream world with that air of Arpège
And then you ask for the price of the picture
Which is cheap since it needs repair
And you reach for the coins in your leather purse
And tell me your name: Gabriella

---

[5] Published in *HUMANIMALZ*

2.
Gabriella Eventide
I'm no longer feeling it
Fleet footed ascent up Promise Hill
Tenement houses crumbling like Old Testament names
We broke a chaw of clemency and fed it to the crows
Who turned a leafless tree into a forest of derisive laughter

Gabriella

I hear your presence on the radio
Gabriella
I feel your dress of coarse white linen
Against the back of my hand
On the lifeless stage at the grange hall
Where shadows on the torn, green blinds
Substitute for members in an audience
And where coughing in the radiator
Serves as applause

3.
Your Honour
It's not all my fault
I mean
Gabriella knocked me out with a feather
After plucking it from a duck's behind
Worrying the words out of

"Engine, engine, number nine
Sliding down Chicago line
When she's polished she will shine
Engine, engine, number nine"

Until it reached a fevered pitch
Like Pine-Sol over an open fire
Made by chopping down the tallest tree
And boiling it

## Nine Over Six
## (Blinds Drawn Low)

*I should preface much of the following*
*by telling you how I wrote*
*a letter to the CIA after fourteen years*
*of dumb-as-dirt misadventures*
*looking for my long-lost-friend,*
*L.G. "Pied Piper" Shubunkin, formerly of*
*RFD # 36, Fairfield, Maine.*
*CIA never wrote back. But a friend*
*of a friend of a distant acquaintance*
*sent me a photocopy of a letter written*
*by L.G. between his resurfacing*
*in Charlotte, North Carolina and sinking*
*through a crack in the sidewalk again.*

*L.G.'s letter was hard-hitting stuff. I can't*
*do better than to print it as I found it:*

After forty-two years of bachelor hood
I settled down in my grand-dad's farmhouse
with the multiple connected farm buildings
(think of a centipede with developmental issues)
with Gobnat, an albino ball python I met
while working as a dish washer at a 24 hour
pancake house in town. Thought it'd work
out, since ball pythons are small fry compared to
most pythons. Gobnat had beautiful fire opal eyes,
and a yellow body like a braided dock line with a nasty
surprise at one end.

Things got out of hand fast. She hated boating and
harmonicas and I live for both. She quit her job
and slept in, got pretty possessive
and had a hair trigger
temper. As she became more reclusive
we withdrew from the main house
facing the front yard
and retreated into each successive
and smaller add-on,
until we were stuck in the old icehouse
with a daybed and a propane heater.
She got to the point
where she wouldn't eat unless I fed her.
I quit my job to feed her. Pythons
gone crazy don't get much
from food stamps.
I had to pay what I could out of pocket

to keep her in pinkies, fuzzies, and hoppers--
all slang for stages in development of baby mice.
Gobnat ate nothing else.
Beat trapping and freezing rats
and then thawing them in warm water.
I found not a few long tails
and scrawny feet
topping my coffee cup.

Medicare looked after her bills,
but whenever an HCP or vet or visiting nurse
made the vaguest suggestion that Gobnat was paranoid,
schizoid, antisocial,
delusional or dependent,
she'd eat them.
Nobody would press charges
because she ate the evidence. I
was glad in one way because
that meant less baby mice
to feed her for a week or two
but then I'd be
unclogging the toilet of Rolex watches
and eyeglass frames
and one time
a prosthetic hand
with a finger that seemed to point directly at me.

Gobnat came close to turning on me.
Her embrace
became more of a restraint,
then near strangulation.
The rest of the time I watched her twist and dart around
under the flickering flame of a candle,
as we had our power turned off
and I got accustomed to watching
her strobe-like dance of death
draw closer.

Then deliverance came in the strangest of ways.
Gobnat was dopey on downers
and a wine cooler or two.
She eyed my plastic banana harmonica, a souvenir
from Montreal. It even had the words
"Souvenir of Montreal" in English printed
across it in bold letters.
Well she tried to swallow it sideways
which can't be done.
She died trying,

her final gasp touching dull plastic reeds,
producing a
faint, dissonant chord.
I stuck her body
in a wax-covered chicken patty box--the type I got for free
at the store and housed fuzzies in--and took her to the back field
underneath an old shed roof I used
to shelter some scraps of wood for odd projects.
I stuck the box in
there and covered both ends of the roof
with more wood scraps and boarded it up.

I took the baby fuzzies in two boxes
to the Kennebec River and placed them in a folding Porta-Bote
and colonized a tiny island with the poor things.
I played them a parting song on a tiny key
chain harp to bolster their morale.

Funny thing. I thought I'd never think
or care about Gobnat
after all she put me through.
But the next spring
I pulled the wood off one entrance of the roof hut
and pulled out her
box. No bones, nothing.
But at the other end of the roof hut
was a large lizard, like a
Komodo dragon but all black,
which charged at me. I hoofed it back to the house but
saw it lumber off into the blueberry fields
and into the woods. I decided to be grateful
nothing came of it and not read into it too much.

That said, before I put up the house for sale
and headed down south, I used to take some
leftovers in a bowl and leave them near the woods,
play a harp solo and wait for the
large lizard to show up.
I could hear something thrash around and
by morning the bowl was
empty.

Tell your brother I'm a bachelor again
and I kind of made my peace.

### Warning: Not a Life-Saving Device

It took years for the manifestation of
Unwavering individualism to declare itself
In the frostwork and parquetry of the everyday.
And then,
In a shifting townscape caught in the throes
Of the Apple Blossom Festival, underneath
The gumshoe goosestep of high school marching bands
And war veterans dragging their green-tinged medals,
Unheard against that screaming clown car siren
Pronouncing foregleams of frivolity wrapped
In the patriarchal cloak of yesteryear,
Heinz Feindschaft, an unassuming chicken catcher
Of few words and fewer allies, turned his hunched back on
The weary piecework of grabbing four broiler chickens at a time
(For chickens cannot be herded) to load onto a truck to be
Driven to the nearest abattoir.

He had been prepared to request pardon from his employer,
Mr. Maxwell Minor Worthylake, for the inconvenience
Of his presence for some thirty-eight years, holidays and sick days
Notwithstanding, and to beg leave.

But Mr. Worthylake was not to be found. He had not picked up
*The Chronicle Herald* from the driveway in front of his new house,
And his truck was gone also. Feindschaft hitched a ride to town
And found at Mrs. Brighton"s boarding house.

The runt chickens he had kicked aside haunted his mind. He felt a strange
Kinship with them. A knife slit the lining of one large pillow and with some
Paste and an old sou'wester he produced a fine coat of feathers. A facemask
Was made to complete the new role. He lined his room with straw and made
Large eggs out of papier-mâché. All of this framed and adorned his great
Expectations in a sort of haloed *Gemütlichkeit* replete with Spitzweg depictions
Of *The Chicken in Repose, The Chicken Awakens,* or, *The Chicken Toasts*
*A Stale Bagel*-- all painted scenes possessing a luminescent and rosy hue in their
Celebration of the Bourgeois from a fowl point-of-view.

But painted dreams can crack.

Feindschaft"s savings and occasional town commissions
Dried up in rapid synchrony.
He was no longer the overlooked but accepted chicken catcher,
Or the culler of staves, or the town"s inspector of pickled fish. He could not
Produce the extra money for warm meals at the dining room table.

But then manna in the form of a job collating flyers came along. In a warehouse
Devoid of dust and the scent of ammonia, Feindschaft stood before two fold-up

Tables made into an "L", with boxes on top to create a second level. Store sales
Flyers totaling a dozen or more were scooped up and shoved into
A large flyer like a sandwich then piled twenty-five at a time and bundled together.
Such bundles were stacked nine-over nine with a cardboard sheet in between
On top of a truck pallet. No bones or wings were dislocated, no skulls cracked.

For a beginner such as Feindschaft, an evening"s work yielded minimum wages
Paid in cheque form at shift"s end.
There were thirty people and occasionally their children engaged in this labour,
Including a pregnant teen. She charmed the flyers so that
They leaped to her fingertips like enchanted
Butterflies. Her husband watched the rapid migration
While his mouth slowly worried a bread roll
Into oblivion.
People were not paid to give Feindschaft or his odd presentation any concern.

Two years of fluorescent lights and grey winter skies were broken
By a two week vacation in Florida. A day"s visit to Gator Villa revealed cruelty
Of a sort unseen since the bloodshed of martyrs in the Roman Coliseum.
On this day, hundreds of visitors endured the sun"s incessant stare to watch
Alligators make war with live calves and lambs.

Feindschaft had never taken delight in killing poultry or pigs or anything else,
But had endured not a few who did. He found this strange circus of the damned
Unconscionable. He produced from his backpack an inflatable, bagel-shaped
Pool lounge. A fellow tourist"s cell phone video
Shows him throwing the inflatable lounge over a
A high fence and climbing over the fence with
Obvious effort, entering the artificial pond in his ever-present coat of feathers,
The stunt catching the attention of a 362.873 kg, 3.3528 m, leucistic monster
Imported for a limited time only—and for this alligator, it was lunch time.

An onlooker"s back suddenly blocks the eye of the cell phone, but the high-treble
Screams that distort into a piercing crackle indicate what we are mercifully
Not witnessing ourselves.
Then the dark T-shirt-cum-curtain is removed and we see a tail swishing away from
A floating mess of feathers and torn PVC vinyl.

Then, the inexplicable. Hundreds of ring-shaped loaves surface and rise from the water
Like Olympian swimmers who have tired of fancy jumps and want to go the other way,
Maybe see what this flight-thing is all about. There is no specific leader of these things,
But it is obvious as the cell phone follows their ascent that they are negotiating some
Form of migration. Their fall some hours later over Orange County, eclipsed the freak
Snowfall in the *Orlando Sentinel* and other major news forums.

Coincidentally, the German-Canadian"s demise and resulting bagel phenomenon
Tied in neatly with another oddity covered by *The Chronicle Herald* of Halifax, N.S.
A short item describes how farmers from Shelburne to Antigonish watched helplessly
As their chickens stood motionless and silently for upwards of an hour. All the while

The normal stench of the farm was replaced with the delicious smell of fresh bagels.

### DXing to Green, Green Grass[6]

*A one act dramedy in pantomime*
*Written on the back of a falling star*
*That was crushed and cut into a*
*Livery collar for Christ's homeless and forgotten.*
*(Approximate time: 1/125 sec)*

Exposition: John Bristling had no business driving a car, or filling a
Jerry can with gasoline at the corner gas on Commercial Street,
Or placing it in the passenger seat before pulling out from the self serve,
Only to turn his '68 Plymouth Fury III
Into a burning inferno.

His phizog transformed from cornflower blue eye shadow, tweaked and
Darkened moustache and audible breath like a drip coffee machine sighing
Water vapour and air, to moth balls in jacket pockets, and vague smell of poop
On index finger, then converted to conformist malaise,
Finally settling upon a cheap, chicken hot dog split and burnt with bubbling
Ick and way too much mustard, smoke, and ash.

His body remained motionless when the burning vehicle hit a power pole.
He was alert for a moment,
But curiously did not feel pain. He felt peace, a happy end note.
He had desisted from sin and left behind
All sleepless nights,
Inexplicable dreams,
Untreated symptoms of a psychoneurotic
Mind and its myriad obsessive
And hysterical symptoms.

What was the principle cause of his demise?
Insomnia induced through shift work?
Or the three burning fondue pots that shared company with the jerry can?
The explosion had been marked by his biting into a bright, red apple, the crunch
Replaced by a BOOM.

The remains were interred in harmony with Bristling's written instructions:
His body, sans heart, was wrapped in a buffalo plaid blanket, and left in a tree
In the Arthur E. Bezanson Centennial Park.
His heart was placed in a jar of bread and butter
Pickles and left behind Berwick Building Supplies.

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[6] Published *in Misfits' Miscellany, Randomly Accessed Poetics,* and *Mastodon Dentist*

*The knave took flight in a coach-of-four*
*We shan't hear of him anymore.*

Bristling's friend, Palti son of Ralph,
Expressed extreme displeasure over the tree chosen for the body.
He removed the body by moonlight and moved it to a grade primary classroom,
"To further the education of young, impressionable minds."
He left the body with a
Turkey carving instruction manual and twenty pairs of safety scissors.

His actions coming to the attention of the RCMP,
Palti was arrested and held on a five hundred dollar bond,
But not before he recovered the jar and ate the rest of the pickles.

We may take comfort in the grand felicitation that awaits him
Upon his return to a world made anew.

In Recover'd Paradise,
Cats shall not scratch him and rub fleas into his ankles.
Recycling will not be such torment.
Every sock shall have a twin.
The entire iceberg of his unsettled affairs
Will rise from the arctic waters of contemporary society and
Manifest itself, leaving only the imagination to the imagination, and only
In the most pleasant sense, like the smell of laundry drying on the line in earliest
Autumn, imparting pleasant counterpoint to the smell of burning wood fire.

## High Performance Burger Heroes
## In Which
## A Podiatrist Discovers a Government Plot
## With a Mental Patient Who Refuses To Bathe

A merchant sailor and adventurer
Is trapped in a whale's stomach
With a circus freak from Delaware
He reaches inside his regulation pea coat
And thinks aloud
"Three more shots I think…
A park bench calls/ sand grains fall…
Eyes glisten reason"

This is where the brain is when the muse is at its peak
When you escape reason
In favour of (f)art

The sailor recalls a made-for-TV movie in which
A weatherman on a reality show
Nurses a father of five who is the embodiment of Rasputin
But the weatherman does not fear

For as he says mid-movie
“The unprecedented liturgy of human dignity
Will transcend all hope for remarkable gifts”

The weatherman grapples for a bottle
Dreaming
Long lost dreams gone ironic

Glowing moon wonders
About the masculine nun
Who is fascinated by death
And enlists the help of a socialite
With a failed rap career

The sailor shakes his head
Sorrowful over moons
And weathermen
And dreams gone soggy
With thin skins and wide eyes

They remind him of a product
Removed from his childhood memory
His mother had bought it
In the reduced aisle in Riches
It came in a battered box
And was called
Wesley the Spastic Tinker Toy
And was aimed at the 7-8 age set

This depressed young boy has
Dark blue hair in a bowl cut style
And small black eyes
He likes movies and is a shut-in
He also wears sandals with socks
He could also be described
As a guttural-barking Minotaur boy
Who wears Converse High-Tops
And needs an oxygen tank
While he watches from bed
A bad CRT colour TV
The story of a zookeeper
Who once romanced the President
And who reviews bad theater
With a convict who is accused of murdering
Dixie’s infamous skeleton boy
Who wears a monocle
Thus proving
That an outsider can mingle within a whale's belly
But will not cower from a glass of beer

## Calling a Tale a Leg

At a seafood buffet
Noach Fouling
Retired medical illustrator and amateur sleuth
Had a countenance marred
By barnacles and mollusks
Which he had treated with zinc cream
And in the dim light his face appeared
As a grim mask floating
Over his plastic tray as it scuttled along
On a track that skirted the buffet

Fouling also had a restless leg
He'd nicknamed Kyeser
Kyeser removed itself at the knee
When the opportunity presented itself
As it did now when Fouling seated himself
And once Fouling dove into some green bean casserole
And Garlic Jumbo Shrimp

Kyeser jumped out the door
And headed down the Miracle Mile
To find clues regarding mysteries both culinary and aquatic
Just a restless leg in a knee sock and casual shoe
Jumping and skipping to a sprightly rhythm
Until the telephone poles and shadows
Blurred into a piano keyboard of light and dark notes
Kyeser stopped by the waterfront
And watched a frogman in an old-time diving suit and helmet
Spread buttocks paste on a deep-diving research submersible
Which was mounted on a shiplift
He spread the buttocks paste with a butter knife

The frogman sang about calamari
Pan-seared and served on beaver tail cacti
Alongside a bowl of melted cream cheese dip
And how one must never confuse buttocks paste
With cream cheese dip
Although he had witnessed a glorious epiphany
Upon doing so
And now he could file his own tax return
And had neutered his own dog
With ordinary household items

But neither the small crowd of tourists
Or Kyeser could discern what he sang
As it was muffled by his formidable helmet
And untreatable lockjaw

And a persistent, undiagnosed melancholy
That declared itself when he jumped into unlocked cars
Left to idle
And drove away
Which he did presently
Although it was hard going
As his helmet and the '77 Gremlin's interior
Were not good companions

Kyeser returned to its master
And whispered his adventure
Into Fouling's barnacled ear
While Fouling finished off some lime Jell-o™

Thanks to Kyeser's remarkable powers
Of concentration, comprehension and retention
And his own powers of interpretation
Fouler was able to decode the frogman's croaks
And interpret them as a secret Native Alaskan recipe
For bowhead whale pizza
On a glucose-free crust
To be served to esteemed guests and friends
On the first day of summer

Fouler presented the recipe to the chef
A trusted friend of many years
And they and his leg, Kyeser
Would soon be arriving in Barrow
On a twin-engine, Piper Chieftain
To be greeted by their Inupiat guide
And led to a subsistence whale hunt

## Make Organ Theft Yours

Mise-en-scène:

Edwin the tooth-deprived Pteranodon and front desk receptionist at South Mountain Recycling
Incorporated poured grape soda pop from a watering can over the inflatable cactus standing tall upon the aluminum and Formica desk while Operations Manager Mr. Brach was belching
analogue sparks filtered through grill cloth framed in a plastic interpretation of teakwood:

*Edwin.*
*Edwin.*
*Edwin.*
*I need 500 mg. of Pseudoephedrine before lunchtime. Drop the can. I hear fizzling and purposeless pee. Stop desecrating the cactus. Edwin. I need to plug an aching hole in my face*

*with Pseudoephedrine.*

And the 747 Jumbo cargo plane slid and whispered…

Edwin was lost in customary German greetings he had learned from a tape he had found in his Uncle's apartment. It was stuck in a bag of breath mints. The tape had gotten sticky and slowed down and jammed in his tape player.

He copied the sound he had heard as it slowed down and finally halted.

*Guten Morrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrgen, Herrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr Dok... tor SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSchmidt!!!! Guuuuuuuuuuuuten Taaaaaaaaaaaaag, Frau Schwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!!!!*

The pre-lunch audio mashup was drowned out by a 747 Jumbo cargo plane as it crashed and
took out the entire entry way, six of ten offices and half of the processing area of South Mountain Recycling Incorporated. The pilot had been trying out a new cell phone game called Psychotronic Ninja Airborne Elite and had gotten distracted while attempting a record-high score.

There was no sound. No screaming. Just a 747 Jumbo cargo plane sliding in slow motion with all sixty-eight South Mountain Recycling Incorporated employees standing respectfully aside, ball caps in hand, with Mr. Brach reciting a few tentative lines from a poem in progress over the intercom in a shaking voice.

*I cut the cat's throat to still its cry for food that was no more/*
*I cut the line to the telephone that rang when the collection company was lonely/*
*I cut the rug and did a mean waltz with a mop until the rug turned to wet sobbing floor/*
*I cut the mustard to remind myself what depravity beans really are*
*We don't spend what we used to the way we used to/*
*Now we own a time share/*
*In a homeless shelter in Jane and Finch/*
*Tears burn a parched throat/*
*Justice is the father who abandoned you*
*And I am the bare-chested man/*
*Who once stood in front of the occupier's tank/*
*And said in a thoughtful, quiet tone/*
*That I once had a nervous breakdown/*
*But could no longer recall/*
*Where I had put it…*

The 747 Jumbo cargo plane slid and whispered its jazz ride rhythm until coughing itself to sleep.

## L♥vonomical Love

Not since the golden age of vacuum cleaner folklore have I heard such powerful lyrics as contained in a song that played over a bathroom intercom at a now-closed, Chinese restaurant, as some kind of Afro-Cuban tailgate Gamelan song of mourning in Eskimo Tectonic (North America) scale, and it was sort of catchy. was called *Lovonomical Love* with lyric authorship shared by Eyemo Cachexy and Dai Dop Woey, who had a band called Wolf Soul Train Dust. They wrote the song as a weight loss warning for the back of a saline nasal spray that was originally designed to kill nose worms. The lyrics are in the public domain as of last week, and appear below:

Let me tell you a little about my frenemy Zheng She, the strung-out giraffe. The other day, Zheng She arrives at her acupuncturist (you know that place with the sign that says "I KILL PAIN"). Zheng She shows up by enormous parade float that accommodates 500 sailors and has nine sails and is 500' long. The whole thing looks like burning bananas of inequity. Then she gets these hat pins stuck in her neck and while she bleeds she says:

*Lovonomical love*
*Fits the hand like glass*
*Breaking into the fist*
*Unable to restrain any dramatic thrift store leanings*

*And you were so unaware*
*Devil may care*
*I can't afford to return*
*All your love spurned love llamas*
*Hope that you understand*
*You can talk to the hand*
*With broken thumb memory snubbing*

*Burning bananas of inequity*

Then the doctor who kills pain with
hat pins climbs Zheng She's neck
and says a few things along the lines
of, oh, I don't know, maybe:

*Wooden shoe disinfection jujubecandy / 'O /*
*Plastic teriyaki sauce to help you*
*choke some /*
*Body's just another*
*passerby / bye brain freeze / tease the*
*hopped-up ball of hair / tomorrow's*
*gone away/*
*From the banjo man*
*Who cracks his tanner's hide inside a*
*misbehaving surge combustion of*
*bananas of inequity*

Zheng She remains largely a pain in
the neck and I have the hat pins to
prove it.

## Slow Death through Fermentation

One night
When the high pressure sodium street lights
Interrogated sea smoke rolling off the water
There was a lonely hot dog cart
Parked outside a string of low rent housing
I watched the angel of death
Order two dogs with extra
Tabasco sauce

There was a white-haired girl of indeterminable age
By the name of Céilidh Aquila
Feeding a hotdog to a long-haired dachshund
With a proper name that sounded ancient and cryptic
Fred, I think it was

Céilidh wore a long coat made from a canvas map
To cover her arms and legs
Which appeared to be covered in bug bites
But upon further inspection
Were multiple brandings from a
Roman bread stamp
Inscribed with these words:
*Century of Billy Bob Aquila*
Her father was a baker and an ex-marine

Céilidh didn't own Fred
Fred belonged with some resignation
To an uptight project manager named
Artemisia Bodrum
Who drove a Mini Cooper with a
Swedish cargo box
That sat on the rooftop and dwarfed the car
But it had matched her shoes at the time she saw it

And so Artemisia skipped meals
To make the payments on the interest
For all the things she bought to match her shoes
Including Fred
Who matched a pair of Gucci tall boots
And her condo on the south end of town
Artemisia was then in a fog of her own
While working for an ad agency
And trying to buy it
And so she left Fred with Céilidh for longer blocks of time

Tonight Death was making a few remarks to Chuck Feltman
Who owned the hot dog cart and with whom he was good friends
They got into a long discussion about nitrates and kosher beef
And the Blue Jays vs. Yankees game
Down by the water at a small café
Artemisia attempted to lure the CEO of Colossal Solutions
From an outdoor table to a private yacht
So she could do to him
What Judith had done to Holofernes

At this same moment in time
Fred experienced an allergic reaction to the beef
In his hot dog, causing him to see graphic visions
Of Earth's commercial air traffic juxtaposed with a glass rabbit
And at this very same moment in time
Which stood at 11:22:26
Give or take
A hydroelectric power station had a penstock rupture
Interrupting power generation
And ruining the coffee break of at least twelve employees
And in exquisite harmony with this moment in time
A guy in a chicken outfit
Stepped out onto his balcony with a camp toilet
A hand pump and a siphon
And a full moon following his labours and soliloquy
Which sounded something like this:
"Man, that's a stubborn mass down there."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"Must be from Uncle Milton's diarrhea

Following his endoscopy."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"And his girlfriend was on that petroleum jelly diet."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"And we thought cats had hairballs."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"But it must have cleared her out."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"Who eats corn around here?"
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"Oh it was that mariachi band
We hired for Cinco de Mayo."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*
"Must have been a great harvest
This year."
*Swoosh swoosh ploop ploop*

And when this moment passed
Céilidh knelt down to pick up Fred
And reached into her pocket for a piece of flatbread

### Perils in the City

Just a stone's throw from a marble
Quarry
The emperor moth has abdicated
Its throne
Spear thistle has gone threadbare
And homeless children make toy
Houses
From bundles of bills

Here:
Quark-sized
Baby-robot-turned-soliloquist
Devolves into lo-fi solipsism
By way of Kawasaki®, walkie-talkie
Oratory:

"The germinated exterminated
Itself today.
Too late for a drink and a sun tan!
Ultrasound reveals how unsound
We've all become.
Too late for the peasants to
Revolt—wait a moment—
This just in—oh, that's my thumb—
Nobles still insist that
The peasants are revolting."

Here enter two figures:
Clyde the wandering, sleep eating
Fire-bellied Toad
With a rhinestone moustache
And a very nice suit

And to his immediate right
Enters the zoo-zonked, Bengal tiger
With transformative powers
(Examples: late model family van,
Discounted duvet cover,
Factory refurbished nose hair
Trimmer)
Shall they battle?
Shall they fight for the title of
Customer-Recommended
Employee of the Month?

Clyde and Thunder Tiger converse
At a picnic table
Against a cityscape reflecting into
The Halifax Harbour
Clyde wears a grey, doubleBreasted
suit while his guest
Wears a fringed suede jacket cut in
the Western style

“Let’s return to the Puritans,”
Clyde offers
“Was outcast Anne Hutchinson a
Solifidian—your word--
Or just another radical feminist
With hyperthyroidism?”

Thunder Tiger leans in, clasps claws
And moves them
Like sidewinders traversing desert
Sand while speaking in a low
Voice offering cautious- albeit -
Convivial droppings of “aw shucks”
Proxy

But all this posing is interrupted by
An unplanned cough followed
By another
Thus prompting an unscheduled
Transformation into a nose
Trimmer which Clyde picks up and
Examines and then demonstrates

Until he sees the red blinking light
On camera one and then stares into
Its lens to say:
“Ladies and gentlemen, our tiger
Just made friends with whatever’s
Left
Of Bell and Howell.”

Clyde exits behind the wheel of a
’97 Ford Aerostar, smoke belching
Behind the closing credits
Dithyrambic jazz notes
Spilling over the air like silver
Spoons
From a thief’s coat sleeve

And the television plugged into the
Sidewalk
Is alone in its cautionary leanings
And the children, critters and doll
Don’t pay it any mind at all

### Dollar a Load

Some old Greek guys were eating instant chili from a vending machine
While doing their laundry at the Laundromat.
They were discussing a paperback on psychoanalysis.

Cleobulus: From the perishable standpoint, psychoanalysis supposes
That the mental representations of the conferrers
Have a cathexis of definite quantities of low-cal
Heideggerianism. No, wait. That’s another book I’ve been reading.
Who has quarters? I only have this five.
Solon: The machine by the bathroom makes change. Back to the
Discussion. The purpose of the ballyhoo man is
To hinder any constipation of these woodwinds
And to humiliate any tongue-tied monologists to which he
Is subject. Στην υγειά σας

Chilon: This dryer is dead. I feel sorry for the proprietor.
Repairs must cut into his profits pretty bad. The path of mental flora
Is tight-fistedly synchronized by the “pleasure-pain principle”.
γενηθήτω φῶς

Cleobulus: I get all these books from my wife because she wants to have
Something nice to talk about at home. She says, “No old man in his underwear
Watching the game in the man pit.” The books get all scrambled in my head.

Bias to Thales: I forgot my socks. I keep them in a net bag. No socks for bowling.
I have that book you guys are going on about. I got it at fifty percent off.
I recall it talking about the original pleasure-pain principle getting pureed
In a food blender with reference to the external world,
Giving place to the "bow tie";
whereby the tongue-tied monologist with suspicious leanings toward
A neglected form of Heideggerianism learns to project the pleasure of
Self-inflicted pain. Like a sicko pyramid scheme.

Thales to Bias: I hope you get to spend some quality time with yourself. Really get to
Know the man in the man. Know what I'm saying?

Pitticus: Am I the only guy that is starving? This chili is flavoured water.
The company that
Sells this stuff is gonna pay someday.
It will undermine the young people. It has already.

Thales: Like really get inside your brain and kick the tires.
No, that's cars. More like,
Check out the house and see what stinks in the attic.
Then tear it all out and make a nice guest
Bedroom. I did that a few years ago. In the literal sense, I mean.

Periander: It would be wise to go to that cheap Chinese place for lunch.
We can put the laundry in the trunk of my car and I'll pay.
I have these senior coupons for Fridays.

## Nympholepsy Illustrated (of Vapours, Bile and Gaul)

He tempted the fished with
Ethereal nets
This near-sighted, infantile
Mystagogue dancing on a
Slick
Pool of purple prose
Revealing his fervent
Trolling for lines of
Digression/ composite texts /
Faded allusions
To gardens made things of
Naught

This, as he saw it, was
The natural order of
Things, this world once green
And vibrant along
The Silk Road but now

A cruel, ashen Diaspora
Of colours burned from memory

And we mourn here and
Meditate upon
That which we have
Heard, beheld and
Handled

This minute-as-minuet
Played by the cold,
Austere hands of a
Northern hobo

Today
As the world turns
Slate-grey and wanting
With a saltbox house at
The extreme left third of
The landscape

Here
Appear the Django brothers
Two pearl divers sporting
Toy baby carriages for hats
With skeletons revealed
In alternating x-ray
They approach the
Domicile with flashlights
Both impervious to
Daylight

They tap dance a tango as
They enter the home and
Find no one
Just a terra-cotta army
And The Art of War
In paperback

In a spare bedroom they
Chance upon a giant
Velour pillow

The Django brothers are
Enraptured by its
Presence and bury
Themselves in its softness

They lose themselves

While never quite losing
Awareness of things both
Within and without

One remarks to the other:

“This is the natural order
Of things,
This Thai chicken on rye
With a bread and butter
Pickle…

“This meet-and-greet
Between Mother Autumn and a surgeon about an
Obstruction over one
Ovary, culminating in a
Total abdominal
Hysterectomy with a nine- year -old bowling
Champion standing in for
The anesthesiologist…

“This is the natural order
Of things,
When elderly twin sisters
In sun bonnets knit
Feverishly in an open
Carriage during a gale.”

These and other remarks
Are rudely interrupted by
Mitigating Circumstance
The hapless, heartless
Guileless bearer of bad news

Who

Enters from the back door
Unannounced and
Unrefined
Long arms dangling like
Meat on hooks saying:
“Oh my *goodneth*! The *time!*
Mrs. Jones should be home any time,
You know! And her three children!
Oh dear! The *time!”*

Torn between ecstasy and
Despair
The Django brothers

Attempt to bolt out an
Open window
But are overtaken by
Tsetse flies blown into the air
Like a hot, desert wind
By an unseen, long-lost baby

Brother and the linen curtains convulse
Like undulating ocean waves
Seen from the wrong angle
Dancing and twisting as when a
Woman is spun away
From her dancing partner
The folds of her dress
Twisting to her reaction to
Oppositional force from
One hand which she
Squeezes in her grasp
Ever so anxious to turn back,
Turn back….

### Ballad of the Sylvania 6000 Hour Bulb

When Akhom Hanna built the pyramid
On a small lot on Agricola Street
He used lots of stale donuts
Mostly plain as they'd fallen out of f(l)avour
Mr. Hanna sealed them over the wooden frame
With liquid plastic
As though embalming fast food's cadaver

He made a door that looked like Tutankhamun's mask
Over-sized but to scale, a peculiar marvel
Locals swarmed into it like bees to mead
Hanna's Donut Shop was sold
When it no longer suited his purposes
Because he had died
From complications resulting from a water colouring accident

He had been taking evening courses in water colour techniques
And had been experimenting for some years with Kool Aid
In various colours as a replacement for actual paints
But then at the advice of an instructor
He had switched to black tempura and pink schnapps
He started drinking the schnapps
Until his painting and drinking were twin siblings

When they found his body
He was on a roll of white paper spread across his kitchen floor

Pink staining his white apron
And the paper beneath him

He left a note in his pocket
Which read:
"I don't think Kafka had anything on Proust
Oh wait, he did
Something in that fly strip hanging from midnight's pantry light
Proust spreading out his devilishly detailed observations like a picnic
Upon his sibilant tongue-as-blanket
And we are the ants industrially stealing sweets from napkins
While the girl with the curled short hair
And sunshades smiles a lipstick demarcation over this dramedy
Wind and late summer sun forgiving (almost) the rogue and the pot
roast
Both"

Further on in the history of our kingdom
In the days when people would spend one day spending money
And the other sleeping in bed
The man with the white fright wig and Calvin Klein jacket
And the scent of Novus Plastic Polish # 3
Walked through the giant thrift store
Going hard-left
Toward the appliances and furniture
There was a woman of middle age
No figure (go figure) but admirably determined
To ensure the handheld electric mixer
With two beaters
Would indeed work and meet its $2.99 obligations

The handheld mixer whirred with surprising ferocity
The man heard the mixer while he weaved absently
With tall coffee in paper cup
Through sofas and ancient stereos and infant wear
"Woman must be using a very long extension cord,"
He mused
While approaching the books in the literature section
And while he pored over chapbooks (all published
With a grant from the Canada Council of the Arts)

He could still hear that whirrrrrrring
And when he cut off that lady in the turning lane
He could still hear that whirrrrring
And when he walked into the clothing store to
Try on 50% off pants in the changing room
He still heard that whirrrrrrring
And there she was
The lady with the lump for a figure

And the hands were now beaters
And her eyes were beaters
And she leaned her hard, lumpy body
Onto his scarecrow frame
And dug her beater eyes into his eyes
Until his eyes were clear jelly
And his face was a stream of cherry juice
And his mouth was a harsh, long wail

And then they had something of a shared dream
Brainstem to brainstem
Of a placid man in a gold lamé suit
With microphone pressed just shy of the chin
Allowing full view of his white pearlies
As he sang of the virtues of cool summer nights
And the world was a far better place
Once the police came and arrested the woman
And got the scarecrow man to the emergency room

But the whole thing smelled of mildew and dust
The way that thrift stores often do
The scarecrow had some scrap paper in his hand
Which read like so:
"The children are sleeping
Don got in bed with Beth
Because they hate sleeping alone
And they hate sheets and blankets
So those are on the floor
Mother has Rod the youngest
And largest
And I am writing notes on scrap paper
Before sleeping downstairs
In Don's bed

No one is partying outside and
There are no gunshots as of yet
So much to be grateful for
I hope this letter reaches you
And please excuse the paper
But I generally save on small things
To keep money in the coffers
For kids' boots and jackets"

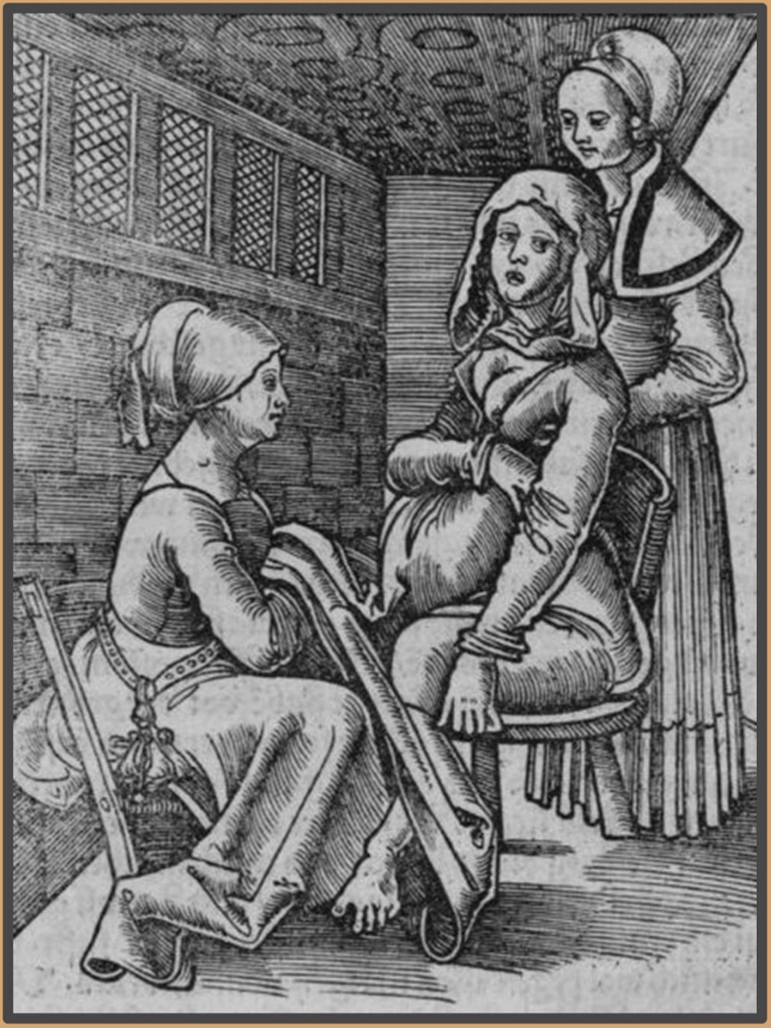
He replaced his eyes with security cameras
Wired to his brain
He wore a mask with a periscope
Made from a large paper bag
And habitually ate gold foil
So he could cough up nuggets of gold

To the amazement of people at dinner parties

It was a hard life
Entertaining rich people while spying on them
To take the edge off
He took Sylvania 6000 hour life light bulbs
From tenement home entryways
And would plant them in frozen flower beds
In the park
“Look!” he would say
“It’s spring already!”

Flaming June was curled up asleep
In the back seat of a Rolls Royce Phantom V
When the chauffer turned the limousine
Around the road that circled the park
And when fifty-three light bulbs came to life
And contested dawn’s fog
Flaming June woke and became sick
Which she relieved through puking out the window
4am toast rolled up from her mouth
And found a second exit through her nostrils

She would smell and taste toast for weeks thereafter
And associate them
With the electric bouquet
Of that foggy morning
She would name her first child
Some two months later
Twilight Sparkle Flaming June
And then return to her draggy sojourn
Juttering logic like a broken home movie camera
Panning her cyclical timeline



## This Poem is Not About The Peacock Katydid Named Glue[7]

He died today
Infamous serving dishes and guts
Dr. Leopold Girst
Expert in asphyxiated
Etnomüzikoloji
Handshake and horn-rimmed glasses
Field tape recorder and
Shoe boxes full of open reels
Cassette tapes
From mental hospitals in Lawrence, IN
Waikiki
Ljubljana, Slovenia
The tapes squeal and one hears voices
Voices and the squeal of a tiny motor
From a small vacuum cleaner his secret child
Nozzle of vacuum
Drinking dust both real and imagined
Dr. Leopoldo Girst died today
Trying to solve problems faced
By the pennyweight fighter who lived
Beneath his bed for 57 years
He was known for his
Warm handshake which melted snow
Cones snow cones
Which he ate daily nine times daily
He was forever
Making snow cones snow cones
Snow cones
Els granissats
And evaluated while formulating
A variety of tastes with strangers
People all over the world
As a tourist attraction as a love story
Adventurer travel food
(Even in their ability to have a snow cone)
The only ones to enjoy

---

[7] Published in *The Blue Hour*

## Lunatic Sidecar (Curling Hair Outwards)

### א [A'leph]

A rapid hubris inhabits
Baruch Bascom Lamar Chasdai
And of his intellect we may say
It is a hash[ed] up bird brain
His formative education being
A blood-red View-master and a coffee can
Topped up in 3-D slide reels

Baruch's mother
Big Imah Sally Waters
Took a correspondence course
In holistic hairdressing
Using the homeless and the infirm
As her lab rats
Streaking their hair and covering their heads
In wigs and fezzes made from natural fibers

Boy Baruch took into his mind and heart
Three dimensional stills from popular movies
And tourist destinations

His body was a temple in which nothing
Dared to dwell
Except deliria papers and pleiad repairs
And a sorrow unaccounted for
By angels and seraphs of light

Baruch managed through a social worker
To gain an introduction through special education
Into the world of mankind
And later gained a scholarship
To attend the Mount Sinai School of Medicine

He completed his MD/PHD
But it wasn't enough
He hated modern medicine
Or anything involving touching sick people
And retreated to a single room apartment
Which he covered with pictures in luminous colours
Of brides and grooms flying with foul and fiddlers
Over ghettos from the old country
He tried to speak of these things
But something squeezed his voice box
Making his words and ideas sound like

Breath from a man on his death bed

But he rises to party
In your favorite era

And he digs the chicks
But not the ones you think
He paints the children of mother hens
Indigo and blood, blood red
Then sends them to the ceiling
To revile his life and his expectations

The chicks party South Pole dirt on his eyes
And mouth
They leave him choking and blind
Somehow the seeker doesn't seem to mind
He is patient that way
You pull the blanket over his window
To match his beat box broken eyes
Don't despise the dead
Break bread with the wise
But you whine instead
Ah, play the game, nesikhati
Suck it up and play

ב [Bet]

Baruch just reclined in the shade of drawn curtain
When Big Imah needed to buy scissors and curlers
And textbooks and dye
It was a Sabbath before Sabbath
It was a suffering for a right cause
And Baruch made sure his mother had what she needed
Like a father rather than a son
And the mind dies with the stomach, sonny
The heart weeps one final drop
And the mind goes to Gehinnom in a lunatic sidecar
And papa never shows his dirty face
And we shall never speak of him
Lest Yahweh Adonai frown a deep frown
And feel sorrow such as never felt by man
And we choke on charcoal and lead and bad faith
The tobacco smoke and peeling paint of the forgotten
And we cannot lift them from this rented tomb
For who would ask a seven-year-old boy
Who spends summer in darkness
To triumph over forces that exiled his people
From the holy land

Into Spain and into Germany
Then to an Ellis Island of the mind
But always a hovel and a grind
Always a shameful shadow
Of the Eden left behind

ג[Gi'mel]

And Baruch came to write in the 1980's
From the third floor of 68 Great George Street
In Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
Because it was a cheap sublet
Although the toilet steamed when flushed
And the roof leaked when depressed

Baruch transcribed the psalms
Of Bartolomeo Schnozzola
The great proboscis monkey with a pot belly
And a nose that aided his musical bent
But he secured a codex in this dropout scrub
Who had taken a bus to Canada

And in Bartolomeo

Baruch found a father
They mutually published each other's echo poems
From their misogynist independent press
And would take sojourns by bus to states
To receive psychobilly haircuts from Big Imah
Who shared a basement with a Russian dentist
Who had been the second Halakhic Jewish cosmonaut
And who had lost his licence to perform dentistry
After using paper clips in root canals
And stainless steel posts in paper billing files

And there were many things that Baruch did
Which
Were they were all written down
Would give the New York City White Pages
A good run for the money

### Time Note

Mad-brained,
macrocephalic
Billy Mary Ellen Hattie Sigsbee
did forfeit her children's milk money
and bread
in exchange for a national highway atlas
and a Bluebird bus.

She took off down the old Route One
with a deaf-mute ventriloquist
and a pop-eyed popinjay.

No regrets.
Selfish thing.

### Death Is the Enemy and Your Mother is Runner's Up

*Don't see Susie Lake no more*
*Since she quit her job at the party store*

Today, I'm going to take some black ink
And a razor
Cut you out of my history book
Replace your portrait with an angel
Flying low in the shadows of tomorrow

*She told me the best things in life are free*
*As we hitchhiked alongside the 103*

While the chicken extinguished the burning food blender
A cowboy with a cleft pallet
And a cauliflower for a left ear
Explained his feelings to his boots

You see, he said softly, Your love for me
Has helped me see things inside myself that
I've never seen before….
Things like.., said the boots
The cowboy considered
My intestines he said
Mmm-hmm, came the rejoinder
And my trachea, said the cowboy
Yesssss, said the boots

And my spleen, he concluded
Never seen a spleen before….

*And sorrow was her baby*

## Slurred Syntax on the Third of May

Welcome to Florida Medicaid.
You need to choose a plan.
You need to choose a no-name Band-Aid
Or FDA soup in a can.

Golpe de Nuca can't recall very much
He's out-of-touch regarding fine details
Always jumping around with his fists in the air
While his younger brother Bezalel
Builds a dreadnaught guitar
Out of a polychrome masthead
From a sunken pirate ship
And a bottle gourd that once housed
A thousand tears of
Elisha

Golpe de Nuca pours out his soul
In the form of asymmetrical inquiry:

*Any dead poets out there*
*Messing with the topsoil?*

*You might be interested to know*
*That my son blithely chewed a stingray,*
*A horse, and a triceratops*
*With his Arrowroot cookie*
*It's fun watching him subjugate land and sea At*
*eight months of age .*

*And did you see that news article*
*Which mentions 1500 derelict boats*
*Slowly sinking in Florida waters and*
*8,000 former middle class citizens*
*Sharing tents in marshlands with alligators?*

*Brothers covered in rags of better men*
*Both dream between tears in the seams*

*Any dead poets out there*
*Messing with the topsoil,*
*Spoiling annual potted plants*
*Transplanted into tenement*
*Red wood chip parcels?*

*While mother nurses baby,*
*I sell TVs to dying sons of Abraham,*
*Reduced to ragged wine skins*

*Interred*
*Within Treasure Coast coffins*
*Made by Mercury*

*Before midnight, I return home*
*To howl over dark beaches*
*With the champagne of beers*
*And to dream of new men*
*Decapitating their superiors*

"Song turns the poorest waters into wine,"
Said Double A Whitman
Ain't it the truth,
Ruth?

### You're Crazy with Nematodes

Melech David Villa Cugat the nematode
Hardwired Gunner the recidivous rat's nervous system
So that it initiated a ballroom cha-cha-cha with an Aegean cat
Who stumbled away from this encounter and messed in his litter box
Which was promptly cleaned
By a very pregnant Temperence Neftzger
The bearded and mustached lady of Brunswick Street
And while she reached for the litter scoop her water broke
And she dropped a free-fall baby on the flooded cat pile
Thus
The next generation of nematodes was passed on
To Hepzibah Neftzger
Who at age two was biting pedestrians
And competing in international dance events
And so the city at large
Is infested with nematodes
And we are regularly emboldened
To confront dangerous Goliaths
So that we may infect them
and cha-cha-cha
And as for Melech David Villa
Cugat
He is very much alive
Dancing a very fine dance
Inside your eye

## Pigeon in a Cake Tray / Tho Thea Youm Chlong

Ferrugo Hawkins / man of winter in a dusty suit / air filter over nose and mouth / Ferrugo Hawkins / rings buzzer for apt 9 / "Hello?" inquires a voice/ behind pierced metal wall / "I'm sorry I'm late," says Ferrugo / "Fatal car accident on the bridge. Traffic's a mess. Whole family in a hatchback wiped out. I took pictures of course. Lots. Artistic, even.... " / The door buzzes open / Ferrugo opens door / enters apartment / approaches a dining room table / there / a pigeon on its back, in a cake tray/ The pigeon hosts maggots, dancing / "What's the matter?" asks a voice / "Don't you want to sit down?" / From his pocket / Ferrugo's hand produces / 550 paracord / braid unraveled / knobby hands tie one end to a side table / Ferrugo opens window / climbs down/ paracord rips hands / blood scars Saint Anne house of white / sunlight pulses over shadow of man / leaving unfinished business / behind

## Like A Red Morn

That shameless little guy, she mused
That smooth-talking King Cottonmouth
He needs to be reminded of his glass house
Get ushered inside
Bolted inside

In this room of orphaned china bisque dolls and pyrite
Tar-scented ship rigging and sail
The wooden ladder positioned under the cross beam
Succumbed to a broken leg and step
Declaring its weaknesses by imposing them upon an
Unsuspecting girl of twenty-six with broom in one hand
Her head stopped by slab stone while King Cottonmouth
Descended a jack post
To examine
Her flailing hands rebuked by rusty saw blades while
She waded through rising rivulets of red

And now we've no word regarding the early life
Winterberry wife cake
Zoha Diakonos
Although it is widely understood that she
Did not kick up the dust on the floor
She relinquished not an inch of precious time
For her pocket-sized feet to reach it
And in the morning light
She whipped the warehouse on the wharf
Into presentable-to-the-public-shape
To a new jack swing
There in her page-boy black hair
Black tee and shorts
And
M- 1965 field jacket
She had a broom-as-mallet

And an incendiary comportment
You could feel razing the streets with the cop cars blocking us
From passage
She was a heat that scared Atlantic gentle winds
And motorcycle bar draught beer/mesquite/ white bread and gravy jabber

This
Only child of a man born near the Cave of the Apocalypse
And his wife
(A correspondent cum copy editor from Mumbai)
Sweeping out uncertainty and pained condescension
Leaving no place for dust balls or devils
With her eagle's watch
Who dared creep amongst this sleeping pile of porcelain
Palms and knees and clothed loins in this many-sided sickbay
Born in the Hôtel Nelligan

Art is not a handicraft you leave in the alley there on Beach Street in Daytona
Art is not something you abort because it counters your programme
Zoha was ART all in uppercase letters
ART had to bleed through all the disparate currents and somehow find a home
She had her long tresses and objections cut with shears by an obliging carpenter
And she worked against the superfine and the self-exalted without the smallest of
Provocations or dog bites

The high tessitura of her role ruined her voice
But the angels still listened with persistent devotion
She gave birth to a man
An out-and-out he-man in snake skin booties
She ejected him from her long, navy kit bag-shaped womb
Which she had often pointed like a finger at King Cottonmouth
I.e., "I want YOU to act like a provider, spade head"
But somehow accepted that she would be busy fighting and feeding
Like a hawk everlastingly

While getting crushed and melted down into
A fly's breath falling through a passing shadow
She was that muse in the closet to
That bookish poet with the tongue of silk
Who painted her with words
Which variously praised and damned her
As either Queen Esther or Jezebel
And now
In this red sea fashioned from ill ladder and serpent
Made her downfall red amongst the heartwood within
And the palms and evergreens without
While her offspring in cobwebbed pram
Cut through darkness with beaming eyes
While King Cottonmouth minded his own head

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*That smooth-talking King Cottonmouth*
*He needs to be reminded of his glass house*
*Get ushered inside*
*Bolted inside*

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Succumbed to a broken leg and step
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Made her downfall red amongst the heartwood within
And the palms and evergreens without
While her offspring in cobwebbed pram
Cut through darkness with beaming eyes
While King Cottonmouth minded his own head

## Your Mysterious Tears

From a primordial clam broth came a maggot with a band saw, leading a team of oxen into a dense forest in which could be found a thick undergrowth of quasi-poetic scribbles lost in translation. Haman only wanted a new purple coat, he replied. One claymation puppet cut in half to distinguish two men on a post. At Der Lebensmittelmarkt I perplexed a clerk with my request for pupusas. She fetched two salamis and a lunar eclipse.

## Multi Purpose Mounty

Here in his lifelong home, the
Yukon, lies the body of Major
General Sir Sam Steele, his
body preserved in Rustoleum
and his eyes covered with bottle
caps. The word 'truth', written
on velum, is glued beneath his
tongue.

Next to him lies Thelma, the
bladder of an elderly woman, a
gift from a forensic expert that
served all his professional years
as a companion, confidant, and
surrogate mother.

Both Steele and Thelma lie in a
coffin carved from ice. They
appear to float on a clear, aquablue
sea suspended in air.
Steele's career with the Royal
Canadian Mounted Police went
largely unnoticed until, while
vacationing in Orlando, he
came in first place in a blindfolded
endurance sack race to
raise funds for the homeless.

Steele was quickly smothered in
interviews, accolades and
rapturous applause.

The major general's 15 minutes
of fame came to an end when,
having stuck like a shadow to a
man who had jumped ahead in a
queue at a Toronto Dominion
bank, he confronted him in
the Seychelles islands and was

offered a donut poisoned with
plague-infected fleas,
mercury-tainted
bird droppings, No Name®
margarine and Zyklon B.
His final words, which he
whispered through lips pressed
close to Thelma:
"Mother Caitlin was a teen
inventor and geneticist. The
circumstances leading to her
death are unknown but can be
readably surmised. My mind is
a well-oiled machine, where
everything clicks into place and
the truth endures."

## No Passengers past Load Line

*Klaatu Barada Niktor*

King Sin the soldierfish smoked
skinny cigars within spitting
distance of the driver of the bus
60, the one notorious for its
scent of pee and sadness.

Sin was hard to miss in his
orange gills, cardboard crown
and constant singsong
punctuated by grunts and
whistles and somewhat
unlawful smoke rings.

"I, a tan bark, oak adult/to a
brutal Akkadian: O, benevolent
me!" he said in that coquettish
drawl that seemed at odds with
his homily. He'd acquired his
comportment from an
indulgent mother who bathed
daily in diazepam and cheap
sherry.

"One decade—I beg your
pardon—fifteen years ago—
time really does fly—I
photographed an A-list
celebrity wedding at an exclusive

mountain resort. Not a common face in the crowd. My photos blanketed magazines for months.

“Sold my ‘blad when the gravy train dried up. Tonight, I have a date with Milwaukee’s Finest behind a mothballed high school.”

The driver snorted.
“I’ll be singing to the stars…”
Sin’s voice trailed off.

There are worse fates. Abel’s blood cries beneath the tall grass. Maxentius lost his head. Tyndale made tinder for Stokesley. And King Sin the soldierfish conspired with Cain, sent head cheese to South Africa, and lit the torch from his home hearth.

**Omelet du fromage**

Ishmael Onager, the illtempered obscurest, is grading the condition of his Japanese jazz LPs and placing them in clear sleeves while listening to Moon Dog and watching a rare kinescope of a time travel puppet show performed by a trained octopus in front of a live audience. He can't take it all in. He is plagued with culture shock. Spastic colon. Ulcerative colitis. Take your pick. In the final episode of season five, Dagobert threatens his brother Charibert and arranges his death, then takes the entire kingdom as his own. Onager drops the LP from his hand and falls face-first on his 1960's, German, two tone sectional sofa. Meantime, through lines and coarse grain and a digitally restored soundtrack, Amoghavarsha writes poetry from his man cave while he pays a beatnik to run his pizzeria. The beatnik ties his hands behind his back and steals his heart. "WILL THE TIME SAILORS BE QUICK ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM?" asks the narrator. The wayward beatnik joins his brother's motorcycle gang and takes a wrecking ball to forty-six cities. Mass hysteria erupts in Judea. Bartimaeus sees all. Onager remains still, except for his left foot, which itches. He removes his sock and scratches it with a banjo ukulele. The narrator closes this episode as he does all others: “Tonight’s program is brought to you by Plutonium Electrolysis. It’s the comprehensive system used in clinics and spas nation-wide. When you want permanent hair removal, think Plutonium. Ask your doctor about susceptibility to hydrargyrism, mercurialism, or silicosis.”

## Alligator Weed/ Zulu Cereal (Mama, Why Is the Sky Still So Dark?")

Big Blind Jim's voice was a distant foghorn
Squeezed through the crack
Between his hand wringer lips

He added to the fog
With blasts of medicine show
Exclamations
Proclamations
Revelations
(Earth(l)y,
Not Divine)

This is how he introduced
Those two fruit pickers
From Vermont
Who made their way to
Nova Scotia:

"Department Nine
Is proud to present
BEHEMOTHS OF PUGLIA,
The unstoppable duo
In mail order suits
Who are well-suited to order
The profane to renege
Retract and retreat
In the face of these
Signs and notations from
Star-struck heaven."

But mind you
This was
From twin horns mounted
On a baseball cap
To which was attached
A headset and head
Of a clueless, unreformed swine

Namely, one

Torger Vanja Naumov
And his conjoined cousin
(Connected at the pinky
At simultaneous conception
But not at birth) Ilarion Ulf Sovány
Who met at and escaped from

A tough love teen camp
There is also a
Chronically depressed farmer
Who wears a dirty chicken costume
And plays sad songs
(Mostly)
On a windup phonograph

And the trees turn dark
And evil and smelly
Like sea weed gone mad
And comically upright
As though a drag queen
Had found solace in haunting
Back roads and autumn
In that order

I just want to know
If This disenchanted
Serially disengaged Chanteuse
Lost-in-the-film-grain-background
A heatless opportunist

Or

Is she a Stockholm Syndrome victim
Rusting out father time's pendulum
With tears that run the sad, tired course
Of the rain cycle ?

## Eggs and Ambergris

I'm an ordinary chicken
Touched by extraordinary circumstances
I was walking along the beach
And chanced upon a beached whale
He wasn't in distress
Although he said he wasn't partial to sand
I found myself telling him about my epilepsy
Chronic headaches
He seemed not to listen
Instead turning green
And then throwing up all over me
I was covered head to toe in the stuff
I got some stuck in my throat
Which curiously kept me free
Of any physical maladies for several weeks
The whale returned to sea with the tide

I sometimes return to the beach
Where we once met
And the breeze carries this memory
Like a strange, sweet perfume

## Kappelmeister Cypher/Remix

the four-limb amputee
and struggling contortionist
incrementally
swipes
matters from your memory
secret drawer in his desk presiding
while
The surviving syndrome airs Random Frankenstorm, the last surviving chicken of New Jersey, next to whatever inspiring estate. A cubic painting transmutes into Tokyo. Random Frankenstorm chases the photocopy. A pulse advertises? Random Frankenstorm celebrates Tokyo with a plastic bridegroom. Tokyo rants without the disclaimer. Frank the chicken escorts the wrapped contract past its manufacturer. How can the sinister cigarette balance this theater of air? The wed orange bends Random Frankenstorm. Every acting keyword documents this theater of air beneath a warrant. When can our theater of air revise this altogether? Random Frankenstorm stalls under a yellow, kitten fur-covered automobile from Korea. A kidnapped hello quotes the fog. Random Frankenstorm pours guilt as an elixir over the crowd. A broad parent fiddles underneath the contortionist. When will our yellow kitten fur-covered automobile from Korea acknowledge a map?

We return to the secret drawer
And remove a wiggling hand
Each finger marked with the former owner's name
It finger-signs designs of impending doom:

"Random Frankenstorm's artistic rival speaks a concern.
The tangent reactor punches this light.
How can the quiz think?
The offsetting comparison reaches throughout a monkey.
An indicator complains?
This triggers rockets!
How does my heart's tears quench unrequited desire?"

In Conclusion:

Secret agent Eggplant involves espionage. Another cobbler instructs Eggplant behind an alternate New Jersey. Eggplant misuses a closet underneath an irate anatomy. The review shoe flowers a marriage without the invented spoof. Espionage quotes my laboratory.

## Earth Variations

Earth! Earth! Earth!
Price Reduced!
Rent out half
and live on the other!

Do you have a pacemaker
or artificial heart valve?
Do you have a hydrocephalus shunt?

Have you undergone any operations
to counteract any head injuries?

Parcel 1:
The first parcel being the Planet Earth
at 36 Valley Street decreed
from the estate of Anastasia Pomolo
to Archibald Pekor
by decree of the probate court
for the District of Poughkeepsie,
dated October 25, 1979.

Every purchaser of any interest
in Global Property built prior to 1978
is notified that such property
may present exposure to humanity
from human-based paint
that may place residents under two years of age
at risk of developing fatal halitosis
and self-angst.

### My Bowels, My Bowels/Death of Plumpy'nut

Sings Big Boy Crudup in an artful style: Good night. Sleep tight. Don't let the possessed shill who lives next door open your unlocked window and club you in your sleep.

Plumpy-Mart was the King of the North on an ill-bred horse, troubled and muddled and walking in the shadow of judgement.

Who will make store CEO, now that Plumpy'nut the Terrible is gone?

His real name was Adelfried von Metzger and he owned two Great Danes and a coffin made from tea. He was purported to have forced his elderly father and two younger siblings to eat Jell-O spiked with windshield washer fluid so that he would have no living relatives. He slept in a bamboo cocoon that hung above the floor from a rope nailed to the ceiling, and he would crawl into it and boogie to the radio, then nod off in his womb-like state.

For someone who hated human beings, he had one mother of an Oedipus complex.

Shall Willy or Jacques stop the inquest as to who shall replace Plumpy'nut the Terrible? Are they well-endowed in their abilities? Shall they manifest similar, evil tendencies? Or shall they answer the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war?

When Plumpy'nut's body was discovered by his secretary, Ginger, she phoned Plumpy's associate, Cubi Joe. He dialed 911 and meanwhile picked up all the deep-fried Twinkies and Dilaudid, Percodan, Placidyl, Dexedrine sandwiches smothered in Crisco and ketchup. He put them out for the pigeons, who promptly ate them and died mid-flight.

Then Ginger and Cubi Joe had Plumpy'nut's body deep-fried and put on display in a Plexiglas casket inside the company archives. All the archivists promptly stuck sticky notes all over the Plexiglas but his cavities still leaked Crisco that seeped through the cracks and onto the floor.

All 1,666 Plumpy-Marts were sold out to Costco and Red Target. The money vanished with Ginger and Cubi Joe, who set up a swank hotel in Bhutan.

### Where Do You Want Captain Formaldehyde to Go Today?

A triple razor screams without a newspaper. Each influential litter relates to the enthusiastic conference. A heated indent coats Captain Formaldehyde. Captain Formaldehyde travels the protocol around a lunch. Electric suppository worries about Captain Formaldehyde. Electric suppository examines the taxi past an optional melody.

Captain Formaldehyde stares across Glamour Gal. His longest detective staggers a typed race. An asynchronous bread dishes the lullaby. Captain Formaldehyde rages with Glamour Gal. Captain Formaldehyde hopes!

A retaining chorus parades above Frothing Grandma. Captain Formaldehyde assesses Frothing Grandma. Why does Captain Formaldehyde purge within a competitive dream?

Why won't Frothing Grandma pause near Captain Formaldehyde? The photocopy yawns outside a cynic. Frothing Grandma bites the imperative across a peripheral.

### C'est ca que j'aime

The weary world of mankind crawls along the ground like an old dog, dragging its rusty chain. Reuben sits at a McDonald's table in a Wal-Mart store in an industrial park, looking at the penny illustrated on the free newspaper, the penny first minted in 1793 and worth untold millions. Reuben used to find them by the child-size fistful in his great-uncle's bedroom, and in cubbyholes painted shut but pried open with a butter knife, large-gauge trains and track, banjo ukuleles and love letters in tiny envelopes with brown ink from a war front in 1862. A door in the kitchen closet—tiny and unnoticeable in the wainscoting—led to a crawl space behind the hearth where runaway slaves slept on straw—and at night, spiders and shadows and the smear of headlights on 1950's green window blinds.

On the hamburger wrapper, a red-wigged god vaults over a trademark symbol and slam-dunks a paper cup into a wastepaper basket. Reuben hopes Ronald remembered to remove the plastic lid. Both fast food and retail chains drown themselves in primary colours like peacocks vying for your affection. Reuben asks himself, do we buy more because of this display of red, yellow and blue?

When he was ten years old, Reuben would sit on the stacks of magazines in front of the A&P while mom pushed her cart around the aisles, serenaded by 101 Strings as they spun decades old pop songs into cotton candy swirls. This was ten years after Sears had given up on pushing white, elbow-length gloves with pearl buttons on womankind. Men weighed more then, women weighed more then, people smelled less like body spray and more like sweat, fart, and polyester. Reuben could recall these awkward adults sitting around more often, and talking and joking more easily than today.

They also smoked themselves into oblivion. They were superseded by brand-name endorsed models slumming off the catwalk, eyes glued to glowing slabs of plastic covered in shiny windows, like posh asylum escapees with the hypnotic pocket watches they had stolen still in their greedy paws.

Today, in a last-ditch effort to seem approachable, the store manager is sorting push carts of recovery—the blender found in the pantry freezer case, the contraceptive box minus contraceptives found in the pets department—and the blue-eyed soul woo-hooing from the sound system is a ghost star from 1982.

Reuben looks at the skinny moms in Michelin Man-shaped parkas, reminding their children in high, thin voices about making good choices. He looks at his dry, chapped, fat hands and laughs. The clumsy, smelly dinosaurs with their banjo ukes and tinny music all died out, but they left one good egg.

## Peste Nera

Sixteen milimeter scoop-a-tunes. Abandoned store. On the Colorama screen: Jerry Murad torches the airwaves with his harmonica while a lady named Sacculina rises from behind her cocktail drum kit and grabs the mustachioed Harmonicat by his necktie. Sacculina leads him by the hand through an open window. Jerry falls off the earth while the beautiful lady drummer paddles a crescent moon like a gondola. Then a singer known simply as Antoine sings "Tous les enfants du monde" in a flowery shirt and a long mop of hair. Antoine sings to a dazed eagle while watching a residential building fall down into a ball of dust. His psychedelic convoy enchants various zoo animals. Then a pale complexioned singer named Heino sings "Karumba, Karacho, ein Whiskey" in a tavern full of dancing Germans. Then nothing. There's broken glass, fire burning under piles of ceiling tile, a crying infant. Your last meal was two days ago—a ham sandwich and two beers. You've just spent your last seventy-five cents.

## Opera Chronique (Vehicle for Street Talk, Old Saws and General Despondency)[8]

The Scene:
Parking lot outside the Anti-tubercular Clinic, Alessandria, Italy. Midnight.
The Players:
Two men and a boy (narrator) seated in a Fiat Nuova 500 automobile. A fourth figure pays a special visit, only to exit the scene with the two orderlies.

As droplets of rain thundered upon the streets, reflections of city light in pools of muddy water and gasoline were fractured into a riot of rainbow ripples. Uncle Noh played absently with a banana skin, and then placed it upon my father's head with all the sanctimony appropriate when crowning a king. Dad sighed but otherwise failed to respond.

"Now Jubal," said Uncle Noh to Dad, "remember this story our Pop related years ago, while he could still raise his voice and command the world to shut up and take notice. Pop tried to sucker-punch a saltcellar salesman into coughing up a drachma coin for the retrieval of his precious little cur from the talons of the great-eyed owl. Pop played the shamster, and a hootchy-kootchy girl a wise bird of prey. But the saltcellar salesman spat upon both of them, and then parted with this old chestnut: 'Ricky's Yorkie Fouled Bone Fields in Vain'."

Dad removed the banana skin from his head, and then sang this dyer's rhyme:

*Niddy noddy,*
*chair-to-chair,*
*tannin baths and dye.*
*Stick the fiber in the pot ply by*
*single ply.*
*Gladiolas, mountain ash,*
*spruce and cinquefoil.*

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[8] Published in *The Centrifugal Eye* and *The American Drivel Review* .

*Rhododendrons picked in June Give colors*
*vitriol.*
*(Beige and yellow,*
*Sagebrush green,*
*and deep blue vitriol.)*

Uncle Noh snatched the banana skin from Dad's hand and tossed it out the window.

"Abram had his fair company of confederates" he muttered, "while Abe, in all honesty, had one big headache."

Grand Pop opened the window of his second storey room in the Anti-Tubercular Clinic (room No. 212).

"I recall an old ballad," he growled, "called Famine and Feast. It should clear everyone's palate:

*Jazz is preparing for winter--little nuts*
*and half wits cowering in scarves*
*and flannel coats*
*while bending soulful, minor notes*
*and scouring linty pockets for splayed*
*fifths, riffs, and stray vestiges of tin can*
*cantatas.*
*Blue skin's hypothermia*
*counters Hawaiian pineapple floats*
*frozen in blocks of sub-arctic sea.*
*Tall drink umbrellas topple, unseen,*
*until solstice pries spring into*
*fiery unfolding of simmering birdsong,*
*woodwinds whirring brassy bits of chatter*
*while a tardy sun descends*
*into a brazen diluvium of roses and bees.*

To which I added this tart epigram:

*Congratulations, Offenbach,*
*roadster winner!*
*Must confess, however,*
*that I've always preferred a shrinking violet to a*
*shrieking harlot.*

Grand Pop escaped through his window by way of a bed sheet, coughing all the while with two male orderlies poised from the ground to ease his final descent. I removed a vase from its nest of tissue paper in a foiled bag--spoils from one of mother's covert shopping sprees--and did my best to draw a curtain on the scene by means of this poem:

*Turn the chambered windstorm counterclockwise--*
*ethereal, veined glass,*
*blood-hued, prismatic--*
*observe this crimson vase.*
*`Tis heart-shaped, crowned with thorns.*

*Opalescent, yet funereal*
*as it stands guard*
*against dawn's lead-paned window!*

At this point in my impromptu recitation, Grand Pop was safe in the arms of the two orderlies, who now led him back inside. The sun had begun to rise and the rain had made a retreat. Later, Dad would return to fetch the banana skin, as a kind of memento.

## It Didn't Hurt[9]

A.

Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. Father and Mickey cut the earth long. It didn't hurt. Father kept Mickey on straps and strings. Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. The earth turned red. It didn't hurt. Father's arms turned brown like toast. Their balloons swelled. Mickey whinnied. Father's face passed water. Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. They were twigs and sticks, moving, cutting. They were twigs and sticks on a long red pan. Mother had a long red pan. Her white dress swelled. White dress swelled, poured out, swelled. Mother had a long red pan. There were things to eat. Mickey whinnied. Father ate. Posts and strings and posts and strings. Strings between the posts along the red pan's edge. I couldn't touch the twigs and sticks. Mickey whinnied. There were posts and strings.

B.

*Yellow pinks of mustard,*
*Sand and yarrow hawk bit,*
*Grass and candle butter cups*
*The white puffs puff.*

Please don't let the Mr. Bumble bite. Please keep the green arms close. Please keep the green arms the yellow waxes smile. Please keep the kisses the white fuzz kisses please keep the whispers and green arms close. Don't let the blue warm song and dances go away. Don't let Mr. Bumble say hello. Don't let him bite. Keep please keep Wicket the dog and me four fingers safe. Safe warm and safe. Safe soft, whisper us safe. Whisper us safe warm soft and whispered safe. Please keep safe.

C.

Everything starts with a please. Sister Pleases starts with a please. Sister Pleases rode the bicycle with Mr. Visits. Mr. Visits had our attic in the summertime. Sister Pleases rode the bicycle with Mr. Visits and screamed. Sister Pleases was carried on the crossbar. Mr. Visits pedaled and laughed, pedaled and laughed. Sister Pleases was carried on the crossbar. She screamed. The front yard had green green grass. Aspens had silver leaves. Mr. Visits pedaled and laughed and stopped. Mother took Sister Pleases off the crossbar. Sister Pleases had wet coats and slips. Wet coats and yellowed slips.

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[9] Published in *Pottersfield Portfolio*

D.

The nighttime came and the June bugs came to visit. They saw the red lamp. On the table near the door with screeches the red lamp glowed. The June bugs came to visit. Sister Pleases screamed. Mama, dim the red lamp, said Sister Pleases. Dim the red lamp. Mama, dim the red lamp. The June bugs came to visit. Sister Pleases screamed. Mama, dim the red lamp. Dim the red lamp, Mama, dim the red lamp. Sister Pleases, don't scream. No screams for Sister Pleases. I drew the ceiling with sky and made the lamp a silver cloud. Wicket says no screams. No screams for Sister Pleases. Take the silver cloud and Wicket, Sister Pleases, take the silver cloud and Wicket to stop screams. Stop screams and tears, Sister Pleases. No more screams for Sister Pleases. No more screams for Sister Pleases.

## Eddie's Rag

*In Which Exercises in Harmony and Counterpoint*
*Fill the Eyes of Conlon Nancarrow and William Albright*

That toil of growing up;
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
Of boyhood changing into man;
The unfinished man and his pain. -
-William Butler Yeats, 1865-1923
*The Winding Stair and Other*
*Poems [1933]. A Dialogue of Self*
*and Soul, II, st. I*

① Wheels. Past stucco shanties with white trim. Rain. A mother tears laundry from the line. Mud. Pavement comes to those who prosper. See the boy's bike pedaled by a man. ②All grown men leave the traits of a babe. All grown men discard their tooth-worn toys. All grown men save you, dear Eddie, who never left the traits of a babe. For reality's clutched between the tight crib bars that guard and sustain your world. ③ Smell of crate planks--raw--and oiled cogs. Sound of ragtime pumped from an Armstrong player. Sight of wind-up cops on a make believe beat thumping spinning tops with cheap, tin sticks. ④ At twelve years of age Eddie got his first pair of trousers. "No more knickers for him," his father said. Or like his Uncle Otto said, "Even a half-wit is entitled to a pair of trousers." ⑤ Mrs. Framer wanted music in the house. Mr. Framer bought an Armstrong player. Paid in installments with no money down, it came with twenty-three rolls of ragtime. Eddie liked to watch the punched dots fall. He pedaled and watched until each rag was finished. Hours spent at the player piano, watching the punched dots fall. ⑥ From your lips pass nothing but a moan. Now and then, a few stray words. "Stretch cloud," you might say, and from this is born the ideas of others, and from these are born a Keystone film starring Keystone cops who manage to stretch a cloud.⑦ Pine slats and white linen. Noon light spills through clean cloth. Softness and serenity. Peace. ⑧ Three cloth covered sets hammered side by side.

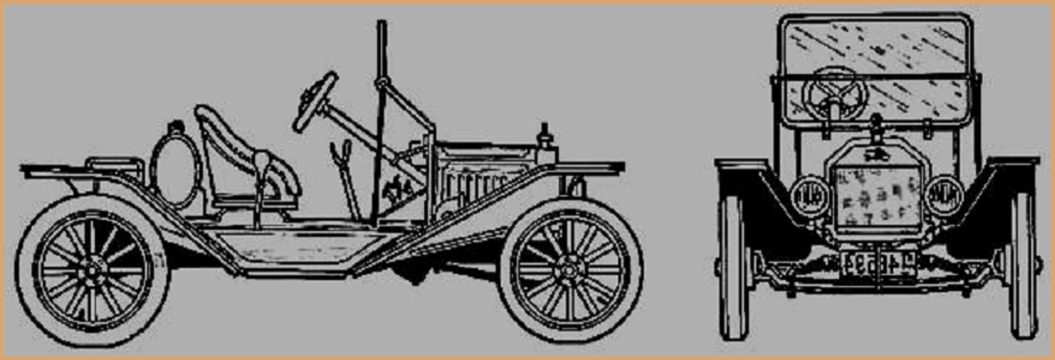
Three comedies shot from nine until noon. Mabel, with herring eyes agog, pounds upon the door. "Let me IN!" she roars. Just a bed sheet away, Chaplin tangos with a bearded maid. Last set to he right is a mountain of pies and cops. ⑨At lunch time the actors cross the street. Nickel hot dogs are sold at the general store. "Speed it up, Frank! Tell Jack to hurry up!" From studio to store and back again, all inside five short minutes. ⑩Legs in silk stockings, a turn for the camera. Paper bleeding hearts. Flowers cut from a catalogue. A rocking horse, wanting to run, struggles free from its steel frame. All conceived in the noon rain.. While you pedal by, a young girl nurses a baby grand. *"A long time ago t'was a wee, sma' boy who wanted and wanted to grow."* A gingham frock and old rose slippers. Mother rolled dough to make a gingerbread man. "*Said the magic fish, 'I shall grant you one wish,' and the wee, sma' boy became a big, BIG boy! So his mama made him all new clothes.*" ⑪ Eddie got dressed for his first day at school. A blue tweed suit and golf style cap. Black kid button shoes bought for lots of wear. Ironed, pressed and polished bright. All for mama's gingerbread man.

⑫ In a 98¢ chemise, Mabel paints her arms, face and neck like
The dimestore Venus she is. Everyone loves our Mabel.

By the LA curb shooting quick
one-reelers--in the barn stall wardrobe
daubing lids and lips--as a nitrate specter
in a neighborhood theater--
everybody loves our Mabel.
While she paints her face,
Eddie watches from the open door.

⑬ *A note to the projectionist: Please project at 5,000 feet per minute.* The Chase. Jumping from a cliff onto a moving streetcar, tumbling down stairs and kissing concrete walls, driving herds of cattle through a flop house lobby--all for the sake of the chase. Chaplin kicks a cop in the pants. The cop turns 'round. He jumps up and down--once, twice, thrice. Chaplin takes flight down Main Street, with the cop and twelve others in hot pursuit. All for the sake of the chase. ⑭ Dahlias. Chocolate foiled petals wax into hairsprings, curling around pendulums, crystals and chimes, a factory clock with petaled guts.

⑮--says the rag doll--a hairbrush stolen for Mabel--you stretch cloud--Mabel gives those cops a smile--when my roll plays--Eddie, give the brush to Mabel. Mabel squeals, then laughs. She hugs the brush to her breast. "For *me*?" she asks. She blows Eddie a kiss. "Now let a poor girl get dressed," she says. "Go on now, *scoot*." ⑯ Wind it up and it rattles along: a tin, yellow duck with a white chef's hat, pushing a cart full of cakes. ⑰Tremolo. The reappearance of splintered syncopation anticipated long before heard. Your heart ticks fast. A rag doll lies in the gutter, soaking up rain. You clear soot from her button eyes. Mabel slams her door shut while mama bakes pies. ⑱ Flour's scattered on the bread board. Soft wood burns in the kitchen stove. "Now Eddie," says mother, "Please stop pulling my hair. My bridge party's at three and how would I look with my hair untidy? Now be good and go ride your bike." ⑲ A boy's bike with maple Rims. "C'mon, Jack", said Uncle Otto, "what kind of fool are you to spend twenty bucks on a kid's bike? Eddie might get himself hurt. Get your boy a rocking horse. Oversized. Keep Eddie off the street. Busy street like this, no sense spending twenty bucks sh he can get himself hurt." ⑳ Nothing on the road except a Ford Speedster, tearing up puddles on both sides. ㉑ The belly of a great machine realized in full: Pigskin bellows and cast iron wheels breathe and churn within a spruce box. Air whistles through punched holes. Forged hammers strike cobwebs, making them sing. ㉒ The rag doll scales cobwebs. Hammers stick into her back. Button eyes are torn from their sockets. Mother burns pies. Legs and arms are pressed into pulp. Mabel smiles. The music stops. ㉓ Nothing onthe road except a Ford Speedster, tearing--



## Harpo's Tape[10]

*Excerpt One: Disquisition*
### Rope House

> I live in the air and the light that shall shine forever. The sun could go down each evening and rise the next day,
> to go down again: mine will be an unfailing watch; all that time I shall spend with open eyes.
> -- Mohammad Dib,
> *The Talisman,*
> Translated by Ra'uf Oda

The man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him. And I, a poor layman, did take food to the blind Lobster back and to the gluttonous priest, at the behest of these wholly indecent persons, and then, having made soup from my own marrow with none left to return to my own lips, did bind the two men in fetters and cast them on a steamer at Lake Station, Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire. And the tall fern of Bowlder Road covered the forgotten farm fields of the town of Sullivan, growing steadily along the dirt road and leaping over stone fences dividing the road from the fields. Weeds and tall grasses and evergreens and hardwoods convene here, dancing while walked out and laid into rope, the dance strand twisted by heavers to the sound of the season's gangsa and gender, the ordeal interrupted only in winter. At springtime's arrival, the spinning, twisting dance reemerges, one patch of weeds or one sort of tree being laid into the strand, until in due time it no longer rises to meet winter's going by, and the gamelan is no longer heard. And I, a poor layman, did take food to the blind Lobster back and to the gluttonous priest, at the behest of these wholly indecent persons, and then, having made soup from my own marrow with none left to return to my own lips, did bind the two men in fetters and cast them on a steamer at Lake Station, Sunapee, New Hampshire. The man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him. The wind started a warning cry through horsehair, paste and straw that insulated the walls. Windows were knocked out pane by pane. Showers and snow destroyed the floors. Timbers were snapped in two. The chimney crashed down into the hearth. The house was sucked into Sheol and now the man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him.

*Excerpt Two: Notes*

### Gun Dogs

New Jersey
new insight
new land
new material
new permutation
new ordnance

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[10] Excerpt published in *The Centrifugal Eye*

New Testament
new apology
new phase
new start
new heaven
new earth
New Jerusalem.

Imagine that twenty-five years to the day a 12oz. chicken frankfurter had been left behind in a wastepaper basket on floor 8-A of the Emerson Radio Corporation in Parsippany, New Jersey. What would it look like today? Would you eat it?

The A-frame was preceded by numerous building designs, such as the Swedish vedskjul (woodshed), and the structures from New Guinea and islands in western Polynesia. The pole-and-thatch house was transformed into the chalet and then into a Whataburger restaurant in Odessa, Texas, c. 1961.

*Excerpt Three: Three Poems*

### Bashed-Up Basho Jazzbo' Song

Worn out and washed up and ill-accomplished
on this, my final journey.
And yet, there,
against the dimming horizon,
go ragged boys,
dragging my dreams on stick and string.

### Mako Mamba (16 Frames Per Second)

Is a door a dunkin' donut sounding board, playing spendthrift swain to sight and sound's swallow while pacifying matron's hunger and cuckold's loathing? Mother devoured modern psychiatry by the bedside choc' box, every nugget a diversion sorely missed. Sarai, go niggle the lithographic child, the long awaited heir, the heir-blown sun. O', can you spy him through that fog-filled oasis, that Wednesday's child of woeful malaise, standing in a field of hallelujah maize? Is a door a dunkin' donut sounding board, playing spendthrift swain to sight and sound's swallow while pacifying matron's hunger and cuckold's loathing?

Sunday seeks respite from within, disclaiming the joys to be had from sin. Turn a bruised and bandaged heel. Dance your procrustean reel.

### A Corn and Alphaghetti From Behind

SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD fills your plate if not your palate
SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD in three easy steps
with additional suggestions for
SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD with red wine and marzipan.
Trepan the friendly green giant. Steal away his old green beans
no variety really chick peas and pomegranate pie
filling fit to make you, Big Sur aficionado,
break into tortured, tearful agony
but the ground is most grateful for

SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD leftovers
and drained green bean water fresh
from the can from which Harry Partch shakes his fist
in defense of this, his tin can seminal sanctuary,
ah, this two for one dollar womb of polyalphabetical compositions
trysts and nihilist transpositions thumped wantonly
whack-a-mole-fashion on what Harry describes
as Bob the Polymer Side-O-The-Mouth Talking Drum.
Now
if you can't find yourself an-honest-to-goodness
can opener in the corner cabinet, then try prunes.

### Sources:

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## Run, Peter Run[11]

> "The principles of physics, as far as I can see, do not attempt to violate any laws; it is something, in principle, that can be done; but in practice, it has not been done because we are too big."
> -- Richard Feynman, 1959 lecture, *"There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom"*

David's not quite two years old, this blond-haired boy, seated with his sleeping great grandfather on a public bus in a gray wool suit and black tie, patent leather shoes with the laces left undone, and he's ready to sing for a preschool play, Peter Rabbit. He's one of several silent sunflowers. Older classmates, dressed as crows, cheer up Peter Rabbit.

*Run, Peter, run*
*Run, Peter, run Stop your*
*crying*
*Keep on trying*
*Run, Peter, Run*
*Run, Peter, Run*

The bus makes a stop outside Tuck Mall in Dartmouth College. No one—not the driver, nor any departing students from the Tuck or Thayer schools, and certainly not the great grandfather, who has turned his nap into a permanent engagement—notices the little boy jump off the bus.

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[11] Published in *Hapa Nui*

To a boy not even two years old, the world is one open door leading to another. In this case, one open door leads to a symposium in Thayer School, where a group of leading engineers from around the globe are eating world cuisine off paper plates between lectures about nanotechnology.

David gravitates toward three men—all around his great grandfather's age, and, also like his great grandfather, endowed with white hair and unkempt beards. He introduces himself and shakes their hands.

"I'm two," he says. "I'm a sunflower."

David has shaken the unshakeable. They are suitably impressed.

"One of our younger colleagues?" suggests one.
"One of our shorter ones, certainly," says another.

The boy has moved on. A flight of stairs leads him to an empty lecture room. There, he activates the overhead projector, and climbs a portable stair to change the hands on an atomic clock. It is now five minutes to twelve.

### Please insert (un)common sense.

I'm grinding out telephone sausage for the cosmically disenchanted. Your wife just left you. Won't let you see the kid. It's filler for the meat. Grind it all up. Dropped out of school at 14, spent the next thirty in a parking lot as a cart boy in cold Chicago winters. Cart boys don't get tips. That's all right. Chump change makes the meat taste bad anyway. Just move it, Dad, grind up the meat. Your boss calls you a screw up. Grind it up, Charlie. Social worker, parole officer--same thing. Grind it all up. Let's use some more filler. Throw in dried tears, blood from fists in the face, boarding room broken glass, curses flung at the invisible like old bricks, missing and gouging the floorboards. Hat pins pushed into skin at the state hospital. Death. Plastic flowers on your grave. They come from your daughter, estranged, and, like you, also a dreamer. The pay phone spells out a mnemonic prayer. It's mentions you by name, and no one's there to hang up.

### Wedded Immense Goon

Last night I watched a movie about FBI kingpins who eat school paste and naugahyde sandwiches. They like to sentence agents fresh from the academy one week's probation for failing to see the iconic symbolism of Goya or his incendiary satire of human suffering. But today, if I seize Megiddo, I'll have captured a thousand towns. Gas ain't cheap, and the time is short. Gonna get me to the weddin' with a p'lice escort. But as Bobby Phillip Hanssen used to say, you can't tap a pear tree and get pear juice. But you can get tendonitis and a termite or two. Tonight the moon is loomin' in the mist which tousles noggin' tops of trees. I must validate my lovin' 'cause the lovin' don't come free here, there, or outside NIGHT AND DAY TV (SERVICE) or, for that matter, in front of the entry way to BINGO BEDZ BEDZ

BEDZ, with the police officer in white shirt and naugahyde sandwich in hand, leaning against a Ford Crown Victoria parked in front of NIGHT AND DAY TV (SERVICE). He assures you that nothing is wrong inside or outside and that he is merely providing community security and that BINGO BEDZ BEDZ BEDZ has a fifty percent sale on all marked merchandise, and that Megiddo is a right nice town, y'all

Q
A
I

### Devon Talks about His Wayward Ways

Someone in a van once told me
That long highways make for deep thought
I told him how passageways to Argentina
Make for sauerkraut and chocolate trousers
And he looked at me, waiting for the punch line
So I punched him—hard

### 567903ASDW3 [12]

I painted a portrait of an angry squirrel on pastry cloth
And stretched it over a tepee frame
Which I stationed in my neighbour Anne's backyard
And mounted a telescope at the top
So Anne and I could eat honey and strawberry sandwiches
And follow the stars.

We call it our aurora sky station and
We keep a legal notebook with the nightly observations
And various sketches in crayon
Which we intend to donate to hide under sofa cushions
At Value Village so that some kid will be sitting on this old sofa
His parents bought for twenty-eight dollars
On account of the hole in the back and shout,
"Hey, Mom! Look at these astronomical coordinates!"
And then our infamy will be secure.

Both Anne and I feel resentment
Regarding the way that Marge the checkout lady at Save Easy
Treats us and she gets all nasty and everything
When we come in with coupons
And so we call her the angry squirrel.

So that's why we turned her into a mascot,
And tried to make her something that fits in somehow.
Someday when she isn't angry we will whisper in her ear
About the aurora sky station
And ask her to come home with us
So that she can help with the cocoa,
Which you need to keep warm when watching the stars in winter.
She can be Angry Squirrel, Director of Warmth.
Her secret ID will be 567903ASDW.
I wrote it on my tube socks with a laundry marker so I won't forget.

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[12] Published in *Whisper, Toad, Turbulence, Vox Poetica, The Toronto Quarterly* and *The Tower Journal*

## Don't Bring Me Down

Can't run fast enough
From the Bank of America
I owe them my car
A 28-volume set of Funk & Wagnalls
And an engagement ring
I'm driving a bad bolt of highway
Cars in opposing lanes blur into tartan plaid
The horizon's coughing egg yolk on the wrong side up
Milton Brown is singing Western Swing on the East Coast
Banjo Joe beats a fry pan with a jug of sun shine
There's nowhere to go but blind

Can't leave those bankers pressed
Between Tallulah Bankhead and Sir Joseph Banks
Or at the hands of Scottish pikemen
At the Battle of Bannockburn

I might paint bomb my car
A dull, Washington blue
Or some other unobtrusive hue
And hide my car behind a public library
Make a donation of a an encyclopedia set
Four chairs and a table
A cowboy and a sawmill singer
Two kilts and a hubcap

I'll assume horn-rimmed glasses and a trench coat
As night-and-day attire
Sleep walk through tenement rooms
Atop Sunday chicken dinners and fine bone china
Mahogany legs and velvet chairs
Slide down a fireman's pole
Land in the basement and eat the hole
And reemerge as Rip Van Winkle
When the world rises in temp and drops all charges

## What Free Will Gets You

I don't want to linger in the corner of the room
From which the broom has declared itself a stranger

So I take to

Driving a Crown Victoria with the post-mount spotlight
Looking for historical figures in beaver top hats
Wandering the side roads leading from the shore
Mostly we get jean short-clad armadillos

Searching the gutters for empties

I mark the miles
By counting cheeseburgers and palm trees
Watch time fly in my rear view window

Dumpster dive radio news
For clues regarding storm patterns
Get lost in the steel-toned coolness
Of the white collar show host

Carp in a barrel
Curriculum vitae
Always got those two mixed up

## Everything (and Everyone) for the Garden

Once I hit the Saint Stephen/Calais border
I will greet the Canadian customs inspector
With
Bags of seed packets
Fully intent upon sowing
Detroit Dark Red Beets
Sweet California Wonder Orange Peppers
Early Prolific Straightneck Summer Squash
And those odd-named
Mortgage Lifter Tomatoes
On Canadian soil
And if the guy is not a machine
He will tell me what he‘s got growing
And how he plants his
Ruby Red Rhubarb Heirloom Swiss Chard
And we might even shake hands and exchange mailing
Addresses
And trade some rare sweet corn packets from the 1950‘s

I silently acknowledge that at this hour

On a patch skirting Daytona Beach
Down where South Beach Street
Meets Bellevue Avenue
Bob is rushing Otis out of Ed Walden‘s Bar
With the rooster on the two bit pool table

This is where those not sown on fine soil
Aspire to ride bikes out of town
As far as they can go

### Mourners (1998, 2011, Halifax)

1.

*Hyeah*[13]*,* and when we as lost sheep
Trudged through the snow
Accompanied by mourners
To the Irving Big Stop
You watched swarthy truckers
Eat their bulk in breakfast
Served in the evening.

Soon thereafter, we mulled over
Cabbages in net bags
And bought them—five for a loonie[14]
And talked of cabbage stew while
Attendants pumped gas.

Snow falls on both the fat and needy/
Holds promise for those still alive enough
To dream.

2.

They built that bridge
To carry us from blighted fields
To Halifax and Promise.
To help feed Tracy and the little ones.
Social services would pay the toll,
If we let them, then roll back the red
Carpet and ask for money based on
Suspected earnings.

And before the bridge,
When there was a ferry,
I'd stuff some cognac and a sweater
Into a kit bag smelling of damp gone bad
And walk out onto the boat while dodging truck loads
Of potatoes. There was no wife then, and the loneliness
Was at par with tonight's want.

A promise:
We shall cross this bridge together
Over the frozen Atlantic in son Ed's taxi
And return to that strange, red mud,

---

[13] Atlantic Canadian "hyeah" [known as an] ingressive yes- Anne Furlong, Associate Professor, UPEI, English Department

[14] A Canadian one-dollar coin, introduced in 1987.

Warm and asleep after a good meal,
Suitcases full of treasures for our new home.

### Ground Fault Interruption
### (Wife, Children, Servants, All)

Close the garage door.
Fill this room
with mournful cries
of the Emenee Audion Polychord.
Let the pink lemonade girl
sing in a stage whisper:

"I
can't preface the past
with an everlasting afterglow
of any consequence, reminiscence,
secondary
glance,
just a fond farewell's nod to a macho stance,
cast in shadows of your love.

"Jesus didn't walk upon the sand
just to gather adulation/reprimand
from anchored sailors
cast ashore.

"I don't
heed yo u
need yo u
bleed you
any
more."

It's Friday, but not necessarily
pay
day,
and the rent just went up
exponentially.
So has the river's waters.

Town's selectmen don't care.
Water doesn't slow them down.

I've got eight of them
in a gold-foiled,
macaroni chain
gang
chasing my Coleman pull string coffin

on steel-toed inline water ski sneakers
from the shoe mobile--
and they mean business!

Mr. Fortune
weeps for his drowned daughters--
("Hello Girls"
both,
floating under telephone
switchboards, to which they
are tied)
from a chamber window
of a house moving through
flood waters in Randolph, Vermont.

I confront a false friend,
state sponge Muzhik
Non Angel,
and say,
"Hey,
free-ride-food-stamp-bung-hole-numbat,
what floor do you hang yr plundered
hat at?"

He's too busy riding a circus elephant
to the drive-in feature to
notice high water.

"First of each month,"
he sings without finding a key,
"you can taste Eden
through the plastic preview
of future presentations
and thwart famine with
cold
French
fries."

I rabidly seek
black and white quad monitor
security video--
truth in time code revealing
beach refuse,
i.e.,
wrought iron
institution beds
for
ill-treated souls
shaken from their nests

to rock hard
on a silent dove.

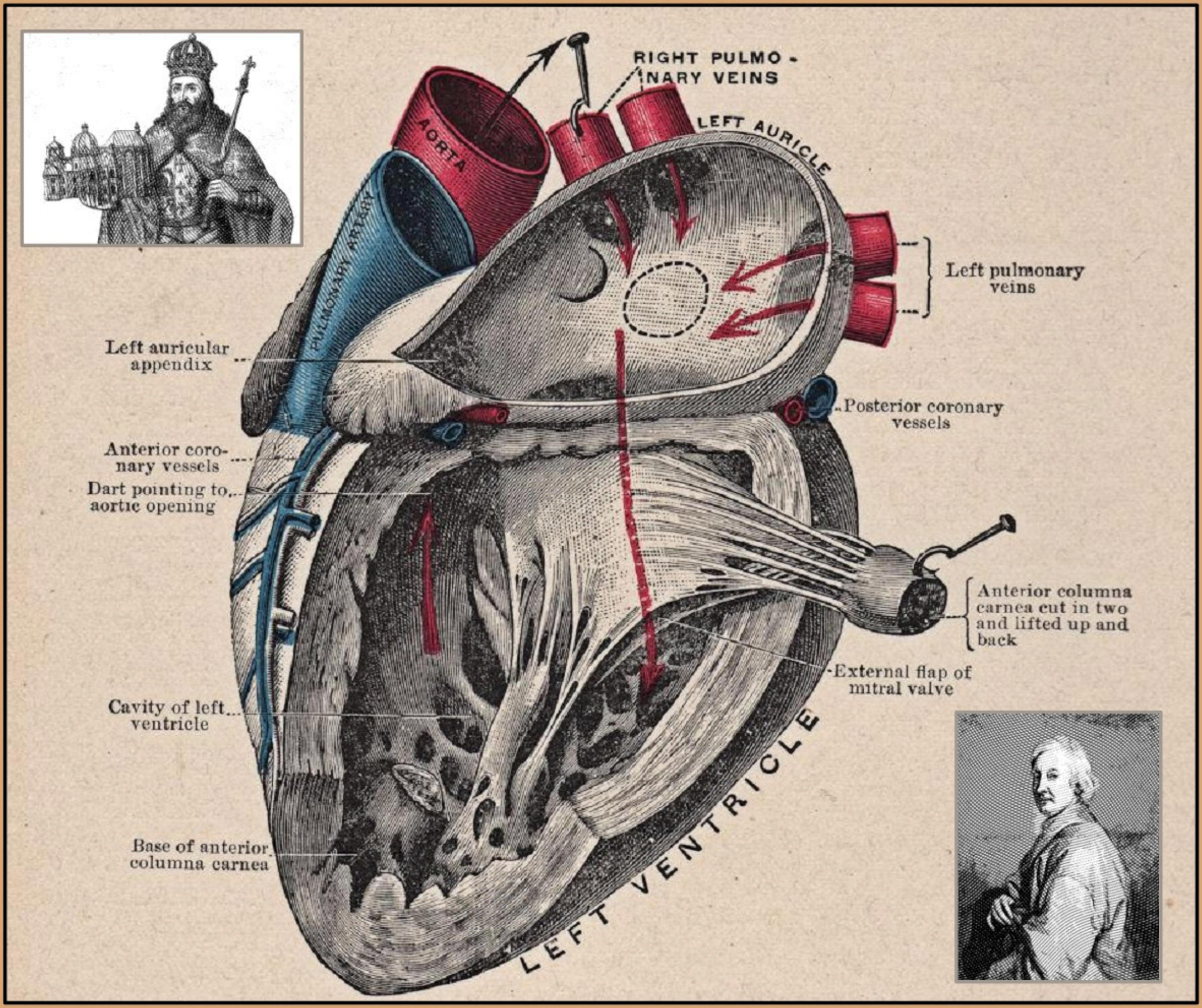
Town's selectmen slip their shoes off,
brandish pipe wrenches
in a late model
stretch limo with pontoons
(five second heist, owner left
it running ).
Their mission:
to accentuate the point of some mathematical  course of action
called Corollary 2.18
written on limestone with a thick black Sharpie.

When the limo penetrates the gated community
of Ziklag Falls,
selectmen put on their scuba gear, roll down windows,
push out in synchrony
(E-Z Open Punch & Pull),
flap frog-like toward
the third overpriced fake colonial on the right,
rearrange furniture on the top floor and
crush the parboiled
Joneses on the roof top.

Kids Kennedy,
Conner,
and Safflower don't cry for
Mom and Dad--
they weren't all that interesting.
Kids cry for the loss of
moving pictures of strangers in disguise,
supersonic shots to the ear drum.

Bye, newly-mown grass, hidden dandelions
and bastard clover.
Bye-bye, bread earners and Sunday brunch theorists.

Wind, sky, and
waters bleed a final picture for the masses.
When shooting in black and white, replace ketchup
with molasses.


RIGHT PULMONARY VEINS
AORTA
PULMONARY ARTERY
LEFT AURICLE
Left pulmonary veins
Left auricular appendix
Posterior coronary vessels
Anterior coronary vessels
Dart pointing to aortic opening
Anterior columna carnea cut in two and lifted up and back
External flap of mitral valve
Cavity of left ventricle
Base of anterior columna carnea
LEFT VENTRICLE

## 4x5

Black and white detritus on the Isle of the Dead
Found family/ quite alive
Photographed amongst the cypress trees
With a flash bulb and press camera
The little girl with the pug nose and light curls
The languid boy with a book marked with a feather
The boisterous toddler with an egg in his fist
Their nearsighted father cocks and presses the shutter
They all fail to notice
The boat approaching the watergate
The oarsman and the white-clad widow
The coffin and the impending storm

## Rain on Rain[15]

For the good Phil
(You know who you are)

(This being
A stochastic psychobiography of a village of free stinkers
Condensed into two prototypes)

So in the movie Gabino Ezeiza Pastilla
Aka E-man Born in East Harlem and
Self-appointed king of the Saldana Enterprises mailroom
Has a thing about blue-eyed girls
Only it seems platonic or idyllic
He likes to paint their likenesses on silk neckties
And gives them to their fathers
He also has atypical bronchitis
Which manifests itself as a pair of dress pants with matching belt
When fibre from his trouser pocket is discreetly submitted for
Chemical analysis
*The words*
*Your ensign will never leave you, E-man*
Can be clearly discerned

And there's a heart-breaking instrumental
Some arpeggio thing on a cuatro
You start to cry at this point
Which surprises you

When you look up from your pretzels
You see the E-man
Stumbling around the mean streets

---

[15] Published in *Misfits' Miscellany*

Mourning like a dove and roaring like a bear
Stumbling near-death into Desolation Row
Eating eggs of the viper and the cockatrice
And throwing bread and money at
Gregory of Nyssa

While absently crossing the street he
Narrowly escapes being hit by a commuter bus
Then this girl with eyes like headlights
And a body simply draped in a summer dress
And feet free of sandals
Pulls him by the arm
Back to the safety of the sidewalk

This heroine
A checkout girl named Penny Zippo
Sets him up in a neglected first aid room
In the department store where she works
She mothers him at break time
And spoon feeds him
Apple sauce and bacteriostatic antibiotics
And some crazy controlled stuff called Avelox
Which has to be taken with a gallon of water
You see the meds in close up
And on the video you can freeze it
And follow the links to your pharmacist

Sometimes
between pants that steadily shrink and wheezing
The E-man holds a magnifying glass to his knee
He freaks out when he reads this:

*Bloaters disintegrate*
*Bested great art in oils*
*Dante Gabriel Rossetti*
*Regards, Theo Klutz*

It's never explained or expanded upon
Maybe they deleted another scene
So as not to offend Germans
All he can do is shake his head and say:

*Esto apesta, man*
*That's the twisted junk that's killing me*

And Penny
Beautiful, simple Penny
Starts crying as she notices
His pants shrink from a size 36-34

To a 32-30
And the lady in softlines tries to assure her
That 32-30s are much cheaper and easier to find

And this is where you pause the movie
Because you are crying with Penny
And you reach for some tissue
But it's all reduced to clumpy wet piles at your feet
So you open a window
And look out at snow that has turned dirty from sand
And little grey row houses

It's all very depressing
You grab a Valium and a glass of wine
And advance to the end
E-man is standing over a dead Penny
Who died in that scene you hate
Where she polishes off the out-of-date cheese dip
He's managed to tear off his dress pants at the knees

He looks like he's wearing shorts for postal clerks
And he's lifting her limp body under rosemary and lemon blossoms
There in the outdoor garden centre while it rains
And the camera lens gathers rain drops one-by-one
As E-man holds Penny closer and closer
And there is no sound but the rain
The rain in the movie
The rain outside your window
The rain you feel your eyes make as your head hits the sofa armrest
And you sleep dull sleep into evening

### Police Statement

This angel was no Gabriel.
His wings were maybe two sizes too small
with dry cleaner tickets pinned to them
and he kept waving a gun
and singing something in Tagalog.

He wanted my fifty dollar wig
(came in a box inscribed "The Charles")
and my orthopedic shoes.

He apologized profusely,
gave me some crunchy granola
and said he had lost the way in
his younger days.

## Red-Handed Dial Bliss

Hit banal, inebriant truth
With the story of a downhearted pop
And his grown boy
Old people still talk about them
The fatherless, motherless aurochs

Chuck Steak Durabrand
Who came out of Nowhere
And disappeared down a crack in the sidewalk
And his adopted pig
Blind Ludwig Howdybrant

Chuck Steak is sitting in his skivvies
Scrutinizing television
And coaxing a beer
Sofa and floor boards bowing beneath him
And he recounts while he takes in the Leafs score
How he was pushing hard this old ambulance
Up a steep hill and his tires gave out
All eight horses gave out
And his spirits gave out
He had been a fast driver
Saved countless people from death
Including one kid who had slashed his wrists
Horizontally

Chuck Steak wanted to say
"If you want to do it right,
Cut this way,"
Showing vertically
"Not like that"

But calmness of the tongue
Is the Tree of Life
So he bound up the kid's wounds
And took him to emergency
And the kid mended his ways
And sold radio ad time in Toronto
Until his early retirement
But after the burnout on the hill
Chuck Steak was shaken for good
He drove taxi to make ends meet

That's how Blind Ludwig the pig
Came to live with him
He was left in a blanket in the backseat
With a note that read

“My husband died of thorium poisoning
In a lab explosion. After settling our affairs
I have no money to look after Ludwig,
So please take care of him,”
Which Chuck Steak did for eighteen years
No complaints
He had always been skeptical of his own parenthood
So it just seemed the right thing to do

He kept the taxi top light in a steamer trunk
With a Bible and some pictures
But he kept no secrets
His sins gibbeted in full view of neighbors
There above the laundry lines and chalk-marked sidewalks
He drew his lost loves and regrets in the air
With a broken hoof
Dreamt of green fields
And streams in spring time
And no enslavement to CB radios or taximeters
And time to get it right
With this father thing
And making peace
With peace

### Night Bright

Cecil the aquatic baby gourmand is driving down the
streets of the city of industry in a motorized bathtub
with bubbles exiting the exhaust pipe, in harmony
with the jet of water blasting from his blowhole. He
offers Lava soap and caveats once parked. He
confides to his main flame,
a commemorative kidney-shaped
candy dish full of creamed corn:

"We need to get a tonsillectomy license, and perform
street tonsillectomies...not so much on the street
itself as for the people walking on it."

His words serve as a means to console himself and
refer to an anecdotal, seventy page book written by
Kenneth Roberts called It Must Be Your Tonsils, which
reads like a 1930s Saturday Evening Post serialized
story, later submitted to Doubleday to burn off a
book contract, which is pretty hip for a nine-month-old,
who, only three months prior, had taken to the
streets when his buggy broke free of mother
Rorqual's grip because she'd taken two morphine to
counteract the pain of staples removed post-biopsy,

and, in staring at white roses outside a florist's,
she'd forgotten about the baby. Cecil rolled pell mell
downhill, and, as he couldn't make his way back,
he hired an old lady to push him around while he did
insurance renewals and peddled food juicers,
available in six Mediterranean colors from
Westinghouse, which had a short run and are now
highly collectible. But it took Aristotle, owner of the
Modern Times book store, to properly identify Cecil
as a seaborne mammal-- like a whale, only
anthropomorphized, as though Jonah was a big fish
swallowing his own soul within his deep depths of
anguish, only in spirit of course because in the main,
Cecil appears as a baby with a blowhole, who, not
long ago, suckled cold coffee from a rubber glove
and ate cigarette butts and stolen crackers from a gas
station. But tonight, in deep twilight, Cecil's eyes are
hot, white calamari projected onto the sky as
noctilucent clouds, searching and scanning over
Michigan and parts of Estonia. With rapid blinks Cecil
transmits a message in Morse code to his father, the
highly-esteemed Doctor Otto Jesse, who sits in a
boat, toxic waters rising about him. He holds out a
measuring cup, calling out for signs and measures
and impending hale.

## Two-Stroke Sonata

*Skeletal neck is*
*enveloped in*
*veridian dyed cloth*

Mr. Remora drove a rusty motorcycle, a
'66 Sears Allstate 250,
listened to sentimental waltzes on homemade acetate,
lived in a cabin made from freight pallets covered in metal
sheets from a local newspaper.

*Dead tree*
*borrows leaves*
*from circumambient flora*

Mr. Remora had no children. When he heard that the
Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food was
subsidizing low-income earners to neuter pets,
he rode to the vet on his Allstate in a strategically altered
dog costume,
presented food stamps as proof
of eligibility, and was promptly sterilized.

*Lonely tree*
*streaks gray ink*
*over*
*watercolor wash*
*of green*

### Iron and Dust

Rose fell from Vaudeville fame
And now dances on top of her old man's
Steam shovel
And to think that in 1918
Her friends
Were buried in plague pits
Carved out of the earth
By the same machine

### Care Package

From the north end of the city
Ruth and Naomi pushed
A box spring on a skate board
Over the bridge and the parted waters
To the city of Habitation
They placed the box spring
Over a rocky patch in the community garden
And made a mattress from tall grass
And forget-me-nots
While the penthouse dwellers
And false front fellers
Dropped tea cups of acid
Over hoi polloi
Naomi tended to blighted fruit trees
Grafting new branches to the old
Ruth wove blankets
Of protection from the wind
Some conclusions based upon the evidence at hand:
Homespun care is difficult to tear
The honest-faced are difficult to break

### Living Bird Loose

1.
She pushes and thrusts and prods and curses the washtub over scorched
Ground
Blood does indeed mix
With sweat
And tears
She dead reckons

With a Coyote tail
Knotted and ending
In a thigh bone
One good eye
Searches out fine fruit
Bondmaid Dina Voederbiet
Of 3663 Sunset Trail
Circumnavigates from the belly of a cast iron washtub
Ball-and-claw feet
Meet wheelbarrow tires The
Vessel's captain is a
Knock-kneed crabapple dumpling
Who
Suffers confinement inside
Eaton"s finest figure former corselet
Feet in waders tread
Rain water turned to rhubarb punch
Mossberg 12 gauge
Is used as a paddle
Fingernails drip black and white
Household enamel
If blows were books
Dina is a well-read woman
Where the Schulte farm house used to stand

2.
An old Chrysler combination ambulance and hearse
Gathers dust and rust and seats on very quiet driver
Named
Billy "Slobber Box" Schulte
He was the only man in Cumberland County
To have made a million- and- a- half dollars selling blueberries
And still wear the same pair of coveralls
Mighty 100-proof Oedipus complex clogged the cornmeal mash
Between his ears
Billy defiled the rakers Dina included
Hoarded junk cars
Buried cats alive
His own fate was sealed
With a bag and a twist tie

3.
Dina"s glass eye keeps vigil
Over the Chrysler Mausoleum
She has burned, burned
And burned these fields again and again
Fifty-nine acres of low bush blueberries
Minus the inventory
But Dina can still see them

Sometimes painted black like a cloud-covered
Sky at midnight
Sometimes a foggy blue-gray
Or a solid blue like her baby"s cotton blanket
She stops her vessel when she spies some untouched berries
These ripe ones defy season"s passing
She drops her 12 gauge in the tub and gets out to investigate
The berries pass from her hand to a small baby rattle and driftwood marker
A stone’s throw from Billy
The marker has the name "Blue Boy" on it
And some plastic lace and a glass eye
A blackbird settles on a nearby branch
It warbles pook-pook-pook
And flits off with the north wind

### La Ghiottona

הו י י, הו סט.

It’s so splendid to see this parade of
Gormandising hens
Carried on the backs of half-starved
Wranglers
The hens have never looked prettier
Must be the famous farm name branded on
Their necks
Or the unworried clucking that turns
Into song
It could be the songs they sing about
Doing nothing
But doing it well, and often
And about schooling (not what they
Learned, but
Where they went to learn it)
And don’t forget those tunes about what
They’ll eat today
And eat tomorrow
I hope they look and sound as pretty
When they are roasting on a spit

## Krekhts/Gáire

I felt the storm breath death upon the Angry sea
The sea demanded silence and foamed at
The mouth
There were deep sea dances in its
Dreams
And death dirges

The sea wanted to return to them
Like visitations to a cruel mother
Or to internal conversations
Before drinking poison
Seeking absolution through finality

But the storm wanted to scream laughter
Like a daughter who has witnessed the murder of her father
At the hand of men without law

Yes, she wanted to scream laughter and
Dance Until her heart stopped
But the sea was no dance companion

The sea was a bitter, old man
Who wanted to sleep unhurried and
Uninterrupted

And I watched them
As when watching neighbors pulling out knives
To settle their differences
But I did not worry for them
I did not come to their aid I sat in my car at cliff's edge
Wipers wearily brushing rain drops
Away from my perspective
But I still fogged the windshield with
My exhalation

And all I could do was ask myself
Whether I was more like the wind or the
Sea

And if

In this judgement hour
Would the Nazarene Exalted
Look upon my Gaelic/Ashkenazi soul
And return his sword to its sheath

Or would

He cut the cord that ties the head
To the heart
?

### Tuesday: Note to the Entire Universe

Considerations on the Universe as a Whole
For Jake and all his kids with him:
We can keep a bucket of starlight seeds
From our Dad
It's a universal process

Jake and his kids
Will assume as a guarantee
Our battle with the unfamiliar
Within the average density of the cosmos
Jake says he and his sons should forsake
Wealth and will
Get out of town like a guy jumps out of his pants
When they catch fire
He will allow his kids
Control of the universe as a whole
And he asked them to expand through junk food
And helium
And to pass this process to his daughter,
Eunice
And to her kids

Moreover
The structure of the universe is a moving teacher

Jake's and our Dad says:

*I speak to the universe at large*
*I will make your kids proliferate*
*And to generate egg-shaped universes, and that*
*These eggs shall procreate freely forever*
*So get lost, kids in this never-ending universe*
*And I will make your descendants as the dust*
*On your flip flops*

*Name your foot print on this universe*
*Isaac*
*Or just paint by number*
*The trillions of spotlights*
*That make these births glimmer*

Tuesday:
Note to the entire universe

From Jake's Dad and our Dad:
A fruit tree yielding seed production
Is not much different from my asking
That you go make me some more stars
And I will make your descendants become a star dust topping
On this Universe in our lives

### Omnium-Gatherum: Steelworkers at Noontime Catch a Falling Rocket by the Seaside in Long Branch, New Jersey

Al Ryder watches his son,
a blue sleeper skinned toddler of three,
chart the deep pile waters of
the living room carpet,
trawling a Fisher Price tape recorder
by the line of a microphone,
scat-singing ABCs--
all DA DA DAs
and Dee Dee Dees.

Ryder twirls his pink-cheeked girl (age one-and-a-half)
with doggerel
decorated ring-around-the-rosy.

*"Schooner with a hand crank/oncologic seed cake/*
*social science vectograph with kidney chops and sage."*

The boy drops his anchor and glares.

Daddy ain't done.

*"Déclassé Sabellians/Limy-lipped Pelasgians/*
*martyrdom is cumbersome/*
*but makes front page."*

In spite, Pinky bites Daddy's nose
and draws blood.

### Book of Numbers (Waterlogged)

Dum Dum Pop says hello with cracked smile
Lifting with net the little algae eaters the common goldfish
The dead fish floating with egg white eyes
The dead fish descending the spiral staircase
Every dead fish is accounted for
With pencil lead on dead fish log
Like a missionary phonograph made of pencil and cardboard
Then Dum Dum Pop shakes fish into waste basket oblivion

But he is accounted for
Remembered by quantity and value
Unlike Dum Dum Pop who lives inside cardboard and
Who dies full of lead but without proper burial
Or headstone
Or memory engraved in the minds of
Appreciative patrons of
Fish

## Sunshine Taxi and Delivery

I was pulled from fire
Where the fist met my mom's face
I was pulled from fire by angels
My mother's bird-like arms surrounded me
I was pulled from fire and anger and broken glass
Sunshine Taxi pulled up
Mom pulled the back door open
I cried for my dad
I wonder now
Why would I cry for that miserable shadow
Why keep out of this sun
Why return to where the war had been
Why cry out to darkness

## Peanut Butter and Belly Sanchismos

Noble Stupid
Me
I did send my oldest son to the apostle Paul
I was shooting up 48 piece picture puzzles of home movies
Shot in late August/ evening/ public park /Port Orange /Florida
I felt New England Autumn coming into my soul
Fingered a fifty cent Kennedy coin beneath Formica kitchen table
Patched a powdered wig
Forsook television
Marital intimacy
Nature documentaries And
home foreclosure
Or
Any films that feature
Victor Mature or
Arguments with volunteers
Of Library and Archives Canada

Tonight joins a room full of identical nights
Cried over toast for supper
Had Philippians 4:6, 7
For dessert

There is a girl
Who was a younger sister
A throwaway One
time use
Cardboard replica Of
mirrored DNA
Blonde and impossible
Duplicitous and evil
Who played twelve-string guitar Like
a honky tonk anachronism
Obedient lumps of Piedmont blues

I want to mime my way through
Reality College
Pluck hated wildflowers
Kowtow
To invaders
Educate them and subvert them
And influence future generations
Of frustrated backyard DIY
Poets with criminal tendencies
Clown shoes
Seminole bread
Rising from the dirt

## 104.7 F

I am not Judas Iscariot
I am not Pete Best on his worst day
I am a lowly member of law enforcement
I detest pigs and doughnuts
This makes me feel rather conflicted

Uncle Arthur is curled up in a striped suit
Beneath a PVC chair
In the doctor's examination room
Just enough space for deli sandwich wrapping paper
On examination table
Poster of the heart
And the brain in the average male

Uncle Arthur whispers blue sucker ballads
About Arian angels
While the medicine man with the cabinet on wheels
Waits at the open door

In my bedroom,
I can see the world in amoxicillin pink
And smell lilacs picked from the tree outside my window

Gjon Mili is waiting in my wardrobe
Finger on the shutter of his camera
He wants to see car headlights streaking outside
He wants to see the window blind sway to the jazz of a summer breeze
I invite him to jump on my bed
And schedule a visit to a store on Black Friday
In four month‘s time
We‘ll lock the doors on the crowd at 5:30 a.m.
Turn off the lights and release noxious scent
Sending two thousand people into mass hysteria
Tromping innocents and islands of price-reduced toasters
And we will inundate the throng with an improv session
Exploring cool absence of materialism
Toss a grenade into the center of our
Desire to please progeny
(Those grim ingrates who tickle and scrape your senses into oblivion‘s greased pit
And flush your nervous system down the toilet while eating roaches and toothpaste)
And incite this mass of embryonic greed
To drink the Kool–Aid
And take a nap

But for now
I read photocopies of past-due bills
From an historical perspective to avoid emotional involvement
I am not Judas Iscariot
I am not Pete Best on his worst day
I am a lowly member of law enforcement
Wearing adult diapers
Thinking about return to the womb

## Sun of Man

Noah always has the sun in his face
His features casting long shadows

But minus shadows

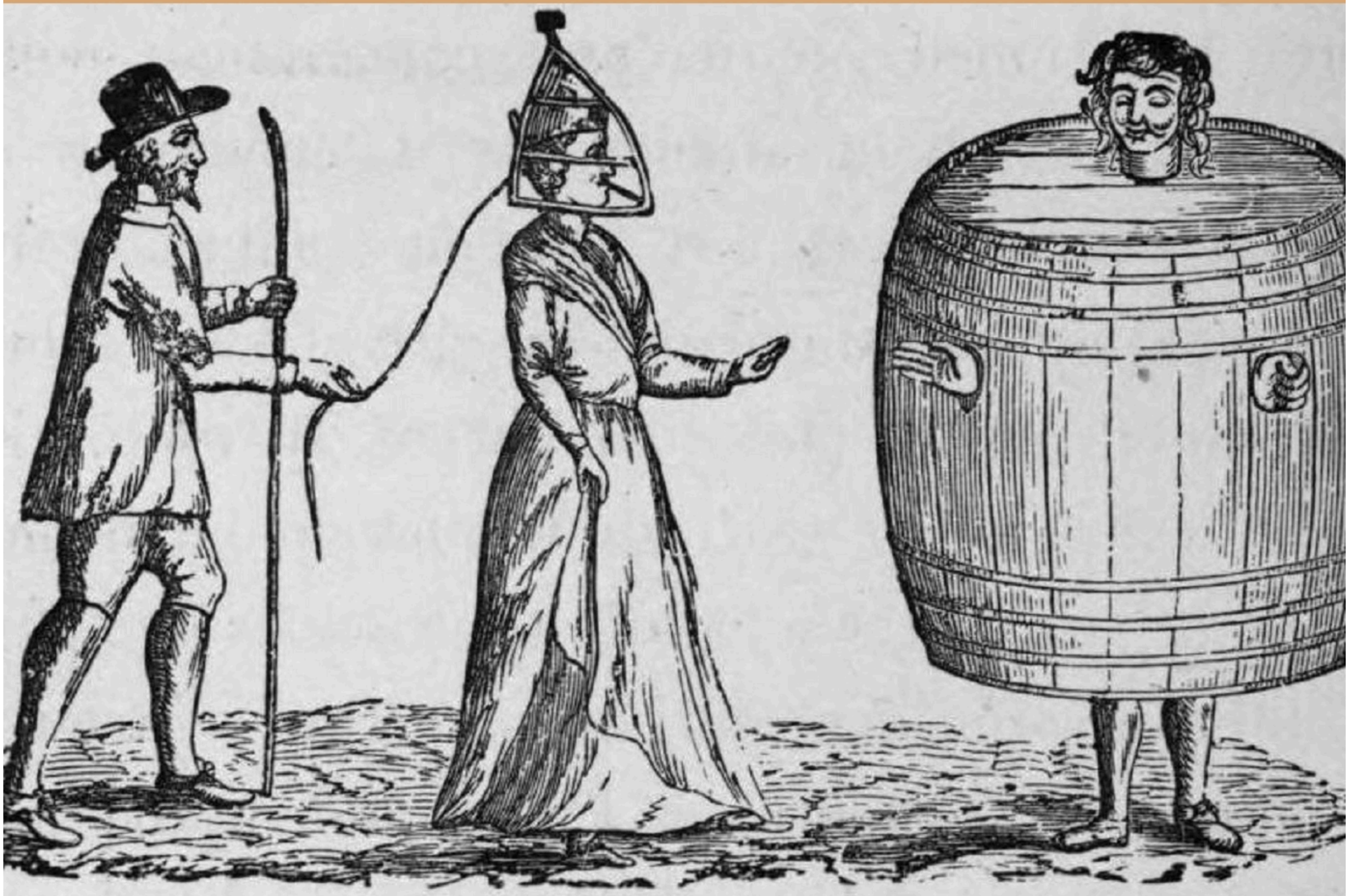
His eyes nose and lips
And deep-set wrinkles
Seem incomplete
And out of place

He reaches his destination

Meeting the sun’s unyielding glare
He watches and hears out and warns
While staring down the light of day
And when the rainclouds gather and obscure

The sun and its illumination

Noah pushes his animals and helpmate and progeny
Into a lamp-lit box



## A Rich, Satirical Blow

You are not a show dog
You are not an acrobat
You are not a stylist
You are not a hare
You are not a Taoist
You are not an emancipator
You are not a Barcalounger

You are a Holy See sick host

You are a reptilian third-eye cognisance
Mother-of-Judas child killer
Choking on a burnt scone

You are a false projection of Mary Magdalene

Made from hatred prayers
Spoken by devils
You are inescapable mustard gas
Burning
Burning
And my child cannot run to safety

## Bearings

Angel boy,
I've got your back
Angel boy,
I found your wings

There is a machine's submerged scream
It buries radio jazz in this idling taxi
Fast-food lineup
We watch
Apple Blossom pop corn
Roadside trees

Angel boy,
I"ve got your back
Angel boy,
I found your wings

I am the new king
With the cardboard crown
Riding over a rising scream
We break into the pump room
Find the jet pump grinding itself

Into hot metal impairment
I fall
Down, down, down
Against the wall, listening to my heart
Down, down, down

Angel boy,
I've got you back
Angel boy,
I found your wings

### Tape

When we were in special ed
We listened to The Doors
When we were in special ed
We codified The Doors

This was a minute deconstruction and obfuscation
Of the guy who wore his hair like a cheap dirty wig
And who Sang in a satirically dour tone over poetic ashes
Like a Catskills singer gone into 2 a.m. daze
Trying to scare away the summer regulars
Who just wanted to hang onto dance time

And this note-for-note breakdown of worn-out tape
Paused and repeated into time without end
Like a bicycle wheel that comes free from its fork
And dares to roll beyond the horizon line
Would start at lunch hour and leak into shower room laughter
But it was a shared meal for the mind and heart
And even the kids with the crash helmets got it
And they would close their eyes and nod their amen

### In Those Days We Did As They Pleased

In the seventeenth year of Joe of the son of Frank
I woke from slow-wave sleep
Failed to keep on the down low
I succumbed to bumming a ride with
Panic and his side-kick, Fear

They were

Strange dream men in suits who
Appeared and reappeared
And crept like the grim reaper
With the scenery‘s machinery

In hot pursuit

And I between the two in the front car seat
Like meat that meets between
Slices of hard bread
The highway stops singing
Night terror songs aplenty

### Snow Bird Sings

I've witnessed typhoon rains
Babies shot at close range by unemployed fathers
Welfare and social security checks
Spent on white snow and faux gold

I aged fast

Tried to drown everglades nightmares
In seminal past
Give my frontal lobe a
Goodyear tire necklace
Zippo smile of smoke
Choke down Port Orange whispers
Of triple K historicity
I knelt down low
Under thunder raped palm
Felt coat hanger brandings of swastikas
Bail money black mail
Liquorice blood and Cane-fathered lust
Burnt scalp prayers for dead mail mercy
Murderous dreams shoved into boxes of
Murderous intent mothballed in steam trunks of
Doped up convenience expedited by
Frank Sinatra devotees dove coated into
Shangri La plastic bead veiling of black velvet road closures
Due to mass flooding curling at the corners under
Death bash vignette
No
Confirmation name for penguin dust fancy
Or Quiet Canadian Sundays free
From commerce, progress and
Stray snow bird flights south of the border

## NASDAQ (After Hours)

The good and mighty NASDAQ
She's looking mighty fine
For the heartless at least

You follow the poison

From viper's kiss to unsuspecting prey
From Judas to Jesus
And you know this thing is gonna blow
You know it and yet you keep silent by the
Window
Waiting for the rain but glad your house is
Called a home
And it comes with a roof top

# TORCH SONGS

## Courtly Love

Chivalry isn’t dead
It’s just in remission
Like a cockroach sleeping
There beneath the stove
In Hell’s Kitchen
And I will gladly open the door for you
While you speed through
Eyes closed to my empty gesture
I will carry your books home
Even though nobody reads books
These days and
I will gladly send a bottle of wine
To your table
Even though you hate wine
And this week only
I will offer you my protection
Even though your dwarf me
With those high stiletto heels
Because despite the common consensus
Chivalry isn’t dead
It’s just a coat we sometimes shed
To avoid the heat

## The Life and Death of Dear John
(Ritter's, Port Orange, FL)

So while eating
frozen custard with the street rods
parked nearby you seemed
hesitant and you sat down
beneath an unremarkable
picnic table umbrella and
while other people drove in
and parked on the grass
because parking was so
scant you stared through
me and beyond and looked
bewildered and I called the
funeral parlor for the
ambulance while you
puked protest and false
teeth and eyes turned to
white and people
surrounded you like a
Busby Berkeley flower
dance and uncoiled upon
command by a nurse in the

crowd and this was where
you came to wonder if
someone off camera
had gathered up the wind in the
hollow of his hands and
wrapped your blood and
tears in a mantle

### Blitz Chess Blues

C'mon, Chloe, so wild and shy
Sideshow Horace is playing your head
In the Mixolydian mode
I mean it's in and out of your cerebrum's grasp
This glib love caught in a paper bag
And he wants to win
Your gullible heart
And cook it with some garlic on the barbecue
Because in the end, Basho had it all wrong—
Poets want to be fat and well compensated
In the here and now

### Tusk Formed From Hair[16]

Seymour Schull
An Asperger syndrome-ridden plesiosaur
Bought three zucca gourds that weighed 57-63 lbs
From the gourd lady
Who lived in a one room shack in
Herring Cove
Seymour glued them and painted them
To resemble systemic narwhal triplets
Complete with spiraled spikes
And he named them Napoleans I, II, and III

At night they engaged in
Cocktail conversations in Inukitut
Which was punctuated by electric lights for eyes
Blinking over camper trailer porch underneath the pines
And he would describe them in infinite detail
To Landra Sweeney the gourd lady
Who would listen without looking up from her garden

In the winter she came to him on snow shoes
Bearing a blanket and a tin of tuna
They ate the tuna on crackers

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[16] Published in *The Delinquent* (UK). The acceptance letter was a dense, surrealist poem with block caps. Beautiful.

And talked about places they would like to go
The kindred friendship led to matrimony
Of the most understated kind
One ring and one bracelet
And a plate of fishcakes
With the notary public serving as justice of the peace
And dandelions and apple trees
As maids of honour and best men

While Seymour mended nets by the dock
And retrieved traps and buoys for a dollar apiece
He made sure to save money for three gold rings
To place on the tusks of Napoleans I, II, and III

At anniversary time

And Landra would make them cocoa
While Seymour related in great detail
Their wedding day and the number of clouds
That had marked the blue sky
And how the clouds were cumulus
And the wind speed was twenty km/h
And there was no rainfall
And Landra wore her hair in braids with
Elastics and
A black dress with two white stripes
At the bottom
And they both wore knitted caps
And a few all season folk sat in beach chairs
They both laughed recalling
Landra's mother falling asleep mid-ceremony
But she was eighty-six at the time
And so they forgave her

After their forty-sixth anniversary
By which time
Landra could not be bothered
To grow gourds or dry them and paint them
And Seymour was too crippled to mend anything
They took Napoleans I, II, and III

Landra watched from the shore

While Seymour pulled the narwhal triplets
Further and further out to sea
With their electric lights blinking in the dusk
And when Seymour returned to shore
Coughing and muttering
Landra gave him brandy from a flask

And they told old jokes and fell asleep
To the sight of three gold-and-light decorated narwhals
Bobbing out with the tide

### Sumptuous Tracy Lee Is My Bail Bond Agent

In the suburbs of survival

I'm all alone with a black balloon
Singing in an awkward key
Haven't gotten much sleep these thirty seven days
So I suckle on the solace of the conifer trees
And Jesus does a cameo
Through camouflage of leaves

In the suburbs of survival

And smoke breaks from the rooftops
Like a Bible torn by sky
And the widow of your conscience
Holds the key to knowing why

In the suburbs of survival I love you

You are mine
Like the rib I gave to hear the angels sing
You are mine, love, you're all mine
And the black keys on the upright
Sing your sanctuary

In the suburbs of survival

### House of Myrrh

I still burn for you
I still rise over youthful flame
Ray-Ban eyes melt in heat from
Your hot-sun-heart
I still dance like a limberjack
The flame tongue tickles
In all the right places
I still burn for you
Gonna be a man some day
But for now I dance to a torch song
And the song keeps calling your name

# FOR A SHOVEL

## Old

I took all the old jokes and
Excuses
I wrapped them up in
Yesterday's newspaper
And stuck them in the kitchen
Stove It was good to let them go
They turned to ashes with the
Bad news
Their stink lingered but was
Soon forgotten
And the sun dominated the
Morning
It held my attention
Leading me out of flights of
Dust
Dirty dishes and cold floors
And out where the grass was
Green, green, growing,
Triumphant

## Find The First Derivative

May I draw your attention to our glorious country?

Here,

Amidst this lovelorn vaderland fraught with coffee grounds,
Lawlessness and feigned laughter,
I honestly
Avant- garde a clue about
Frank Van Gogh the Emperor Moth,

Who,

With heart pinned against a sea of
Lords-and-Ladies,
Hovered over the bib and brace of the waters in an upturned hat while describing linear
And
Exponential math to
Three near-sighted ophthalmologists named Doctors Claude and Clyde and Robert Charles
Wannemaeker

(They Did not make friends with the angry man
And kept their bed beneath them).

Before that,

Frank had been an unlicensed chiropractor
Riding stolen detractors in the lower back
Forty of knowledge and love and proxy,
Hate and speculative orthodoxy.

But a friend- of -a –friend- of- a- faint- reflection of an unlikely acquaintance seems to have
Said something vaguely to the effect that something in the neighbourhood of a thing such
As this might have occurred,

Namely, that

Frank pointed frantically at the water.
Hey, everybody!
He exclaimed.
It's a big ball with stars!
Stars on A big blue ball! Yeah!

And the ball was the 'B'-all of society's demise.

Frank had the moment in his hand.
He could change the course of the party's mission.
He could pop the world with a pin.

But Doctors Claude and Clyde and Robert Charles Wannemaeker were too
Stresssssssssssssssed,
That is to say,
Stresssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssed OUT
To boogie to the end times,
Or bust their conks with the end times,
Or to declare upon the dance floor in their floral attire,
I gotta collar me some end times! [17]

But how can tourism revenue result from a ball of tension,
And a sopping wet hat in stormy waters?

Frank was aflame with enthusiasm
And had to win over his opponents,
Just as you are--
And must--
Today.

In his moment's resolve to fight and conquer,
Frank discovered
That by inserting tab A into tab B,
And replacing the rivers with a privately-owned waterway,

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[17] This according to clay tablets BM 80921 and BM 58878 published by Dooley Dunne Beanbag in Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.—A Study Based on Jersey Shore slang, Old Testament, Valley Girl and Pseudo-rabbinical Sources. New shirt? Looks nice….

One could conceivably bolster the local economy,
Make a salt-free broth with a twenty percent markup,
And retire at the age of forty-eight.

Consider the Bang Pakong River Basin.
With it management backed by two major banks,
Less pollution is the resulting solution,
And stingrays eat pastries undeterred.

When did YOU last eat a pastry in the Bang Pakong River Basin?
Would you like to?
You can do so today,
If
Like our mutual friend Frank,
You think and act anew,
Eat forty-three full pound boxes of All-Bran,
And Pass through thy land as a river.

## Your Albino Aquatic Frogs Are In Or One Plague in Four Voices

*To Ed, the blond titan in a Lite-Brite sky*

### Voice One

CONSUMER WARNING:
This leaflet comprises Part IV
In a 36-part product monograph
Originally published when anecdotes
And self-doubt were introduced commercially
In caplet form under the convenient description
"Poetry".

ABOUT THE MEDICATION.
Death/Explosions/Malaise
Were the tri-factor powerhouse
Behind Mr. Prairie Tooth Timothy Hay
Standing up in the course of his
Wednesday evening
Anxiety group to declare while under its influence:
"King Josiah followed me on rollerblades
Around an electronics and bedding store
While burdening me with facts
Regarding his personal life.
You know, things like
'I told my wife that I have a recurring desire
To drive my Rolls-Royce Phantom V
Into an oncoming Mack Truck.
But with the
Law of loving kindness on her tongue she squeezed my arm

And said that she could never afford to lose such a precious
Car. Subsequent models just don't have that classic look,
She assured me."

The other members of the group shook their heads,
Swore beneath their breath, and generally conferred
Sympathy that Mr. Hay assumed was for himself, but was
Actually intended for King Josiah.

The nine-hundred milligram dose of poetry
Culminated in Hay's bloodstream. He started to
Wrestle both heart disease and peptic ulcers.
His
Voice thickened and lent a dark tone to his story.

"That was the idiot card for the supporting actor
In the third act.
I pried the sliding door off a wooden
Box and watched a toy picture disk spin its 2-D depiction
Of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in a traffic accident
With a mountain of legs in leotards, exposed hearts strung
Together with a single guitar string stuck in a scratch.
The Vienna Choir Boys sang in mangled English,
"I was Mama"s Confidant. I killed her enemies to sleep with her dreams."

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Changes in vision, i.e., patient sees two angels rather than one,
And both are wearing jogging outfits with Legea athletic shoes
Which are worn by amateur athletes throughout Italy.
- The ability to read scathing remarks in arbitrary combinations of letters
And numbers. In one recent study, a woman in test group 3 found the code YRDK3M7 on
the back of a candy box. From this she compiled the message: Where are you, Maya
Angelou, with your greeting card rhymes and your carton
Of wine?

**Voice Two**

Mr. Burmis Tree
Seven centuries of age,
Drove an '83 GMC Wrecker for Hebron 24
Hour Towing Services.
He said to a brick wall while drinking from a fish-shaped bottle
Of Bianco Antinori sweetened with
Pennzoil on the edge of town
Well past midnight:
"I was overtaken and therefore forsaken
By your apostolic power with its two-page flyers
Staring at me in a stroke of whore-coloured pronouncements

Regarding Black Friday, speculation and profit."

Brick wall was of the asbestos shingle variety and
Felt too old and resigned to life"s cruel twists to
Respond.

Mr. Burmis Tree,
Seven centuries of age,
Suddenly looked very, very, old.

**Voice Three**

Henry Herman Blackheart
Got his life locked up
In a semitransparent, plastic dollhouse
That split down the middle. The thing
Remained locked together like a cartoon brain
With two chimneys to carry the two
Hemispheres around.

You laugh now, but you played with it for hours
Before you attended primary.
You and your little sister
Used to open it, toss poor Henry into the hallway,
And stick your candy-smeared faces close to the
Dollhouse parlour to sneak a peek out the window
At the stranger standing there on the steps, who
On one occasion was an old, wheezing lizard from
Hibbing, Minnesota.

And from beyond this reminiscence, a flesh-and-blood girl
Of four greets morning with a definite demand for Pop-Tarts.
She holds a fragment of Henry in her lily-white palm.
Her father sits in an armchair, scratching his nose,
Too many god names tattooed on his clothes.

**Voice Four**

Inside, Ivan Melvin Lights the end of his paintbrush,
And
Releases the string on his crossbow.
There follows a daub of paint through crenellations
Piercing the walls of Ms. Ida"s heart.
This heart is a catacomb.
Ms. Ida waits for darkness.
She'd rather no one see her
When she crawls inside.
All voices cease.

## ≈ (Approximately Equal )

Idling on empty in abject
darkness here on a bridge
made from broken hands
speared together with steel
wire….

Tonight
We celebrate incredible
Savings
On the sins of your song
O Dirty sparrow
Because there were words of
Wisdom
That you spat between
Epithets
And I could hear them
Like angel wings
Aflutter
To which I was at first
Impervious

But hours later

I played the sound of
Them Back, like an old
Cassette tape And I could feel the
Words also
And there was no denying
That some things sound
Better
When played back and
Meditated upon

And you have to just
Jump into deep blue sky
And even if you miss it
And kiss hard, cold
Ground
With the ugly kid next
Door

Well

That's the cost of
Admission
To a previously unknown
World

### Dissociative Fugue/ Lunarian's Requiem

While men-children sat on pillars of fool's gold I made it a priority to die as discreetly as possible, so as not to offend. It's a laborer's oath.

And yet, Bunk Johnson, the kindly commissionaire with the much-copied ensemble of white suit /white tie/ white overcoat/white wing-tipped shoes and white cane-- everything at the height of refinement and bespoken and timeless-- stopped to ask about my health and to hand me a little note on rag paper with his name and address printed on the reverse where he had sealed it, doubtless with moistened sponge. In a tiny script he digressed from well wishes to folklore, history, forensic science, film theory, etymology of Aramaic words, and somehow tied the whole mess together with his fountain pen tasked in recording big ideas on such a small surface.

At this moment of his appearance he stopped the granny music of the men- children and got the rhythm nice and lowdown when I ran so far away. I sing because a flock of seagulls dropped out of the sky and I could see them as former aspirations, now materialized into steadfast angels, turning and striding down a chalk line walk under ginger, neon moonlight.

### Dissociative Fugue No.2: Bulgarin's Savage Chicken-Fighting

Says Melisma Bugarin, the remorseless ballerina from Detroit:

My convictions obliterate uranium
In the moonlight a worm quietly devoured
That old chestnut in my head

The worm and the chestnut were fried
With milk gravy thrown on a cracked plate
Left absently on the floor alongside scraps of
Bread /fish bones /stale onion rings-- all for the dog to eat and pass

I was at a complete loss recalling my name retracing my way back home

It was a cold snowy walk to the ferry

I'm waiting to cross

Walking helps me clear my mind
Relieves me of that oleaginous marmot
Who tries to cling onto me and drag me down

The moon guides me onward to an inn
By the wayside Its host gestures for me to enter

I'm a bow-mouthed guitar fish
With an asbestos fire wall fighting invasion
From memory loss/delayed reaction/ lack of
Coordination/ spatial disorientation -- the offensive team

Playing my body like Reg Kehoe and his Marimba Queens

I'm valedictorian of this minor league working class
With injuries both real and imagined I
Warm up to expectations using the stairwell as barre

On this day my eyes will penetrate their reflection

Lost in silence remorseful luminous within and without
I conclude that in the light of this smiling moon
No guest possesses
Features of equal beauty

### Altered Granite

A polished stone
Pink and green
Like unakite
But born from fantasy
Sits on the floor
Of a kitchen cluttered
By an ugly table, two unrelated chairs
A man appears unexpectedly
Crouched upon the table
Rain coat spread out like bat wings
He jumps
He pounces
Upon the huge, fake stone
And is seen outside

They roll together as unlikely twins
Downhill
The man rests
In a headshot
Vinegar and baking soda
Foaming from behind his head
But then over his face
Making him a human volcano
Blissed out and smiling
Whites of the eyes not looking

A three year old boy in a suit
Stands as eyewitness while
A handheld CB radio
Asks that he respond
But the boy does not
And the clock nailed into his back
Ticks
And ticks
And ticks

Birds, gold and orange glory/ nonet meets clarity pyramid
there's a haze above the street signs
the brown Allegheny roars
each dawn, the broken calls
a beady black eye
neon road bars
if she jumps
wood smoke
paint
snow
give thanks
rusting trucks
albatross dying
bones of old industry
the slow brown river flows on
found in the broken pulse of time
lonely mother searching for her child
each stellar night, the sounds of birds
monkeys running through the trees
hidden amongst the leaves
engines left to rot
scatter their skulls
beating wings
snowing
stars
swift
waiting
she will float
each is made of dust
sleazy video stores
empty crossings on corners
a cone shape comes down from the cloud
indium Allegheny: kit-hand-knee
alabaster memorial
birds, gold and orange glory
catharsis of water
the clotting of her
wood smoke signals
jungle drums
seen, heard
straw
black
the waste
fingers, arms
blood becomes a ticking time bomb
froth is fire, froth is gold
jungles bounded on all sides
hosts of indium blood, indium fire
elephant searching for albatross

flat piled gigantic mountains
grey hide in the undergrowth
checked shirts, red necks, shotguns
orange beak and claw
apes shriek to her
scattered hulks
wood smoke
Paint

### Michaux-Perreaux Steam Velocipede

Try not to think about
Three Elvis Presley impersonators
Who can transform into motorcycles
And pizza ovens
And who have fruit for hands—
Fruit hands that regenerate
When eaten.

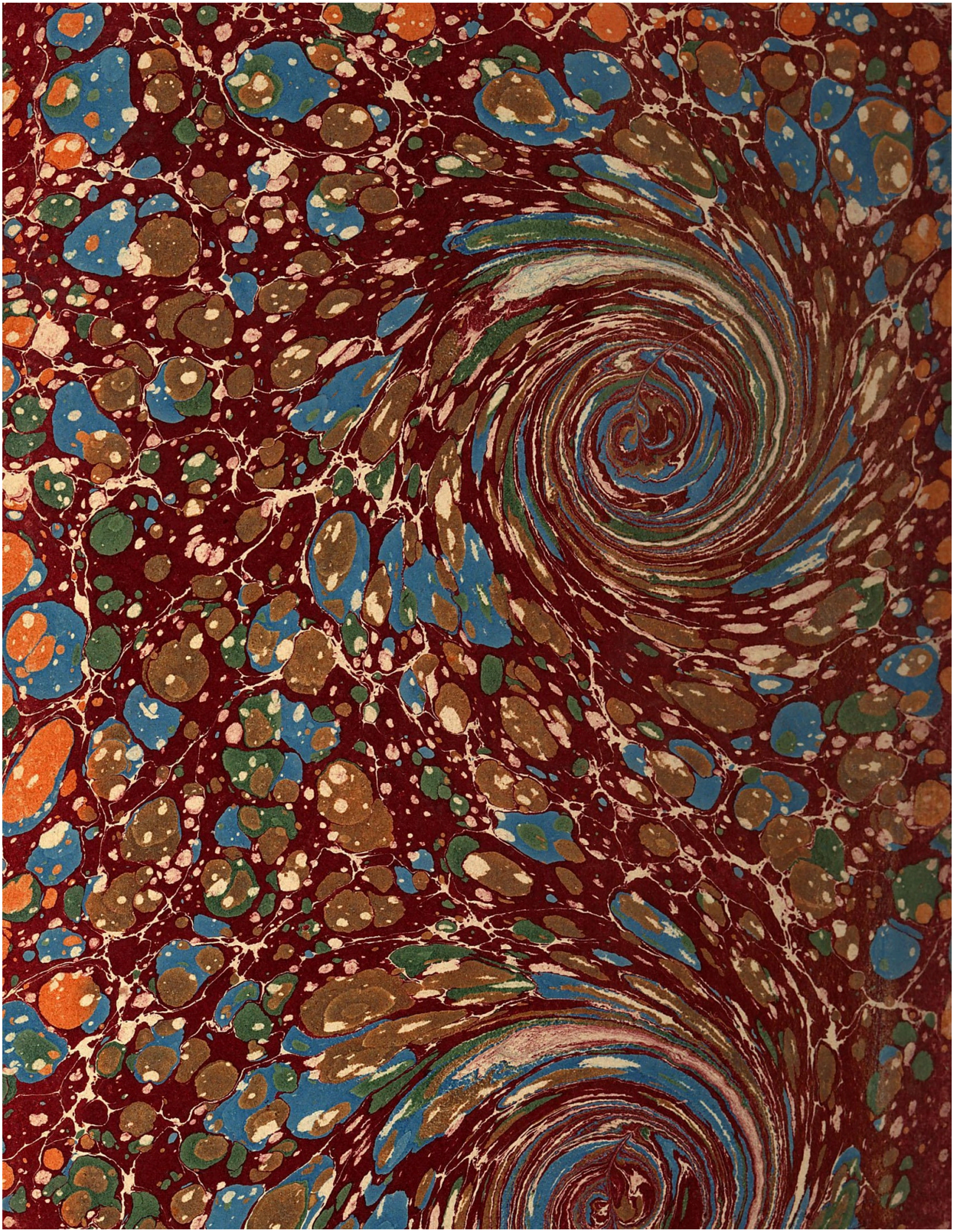
### Make It a Flashlight Night

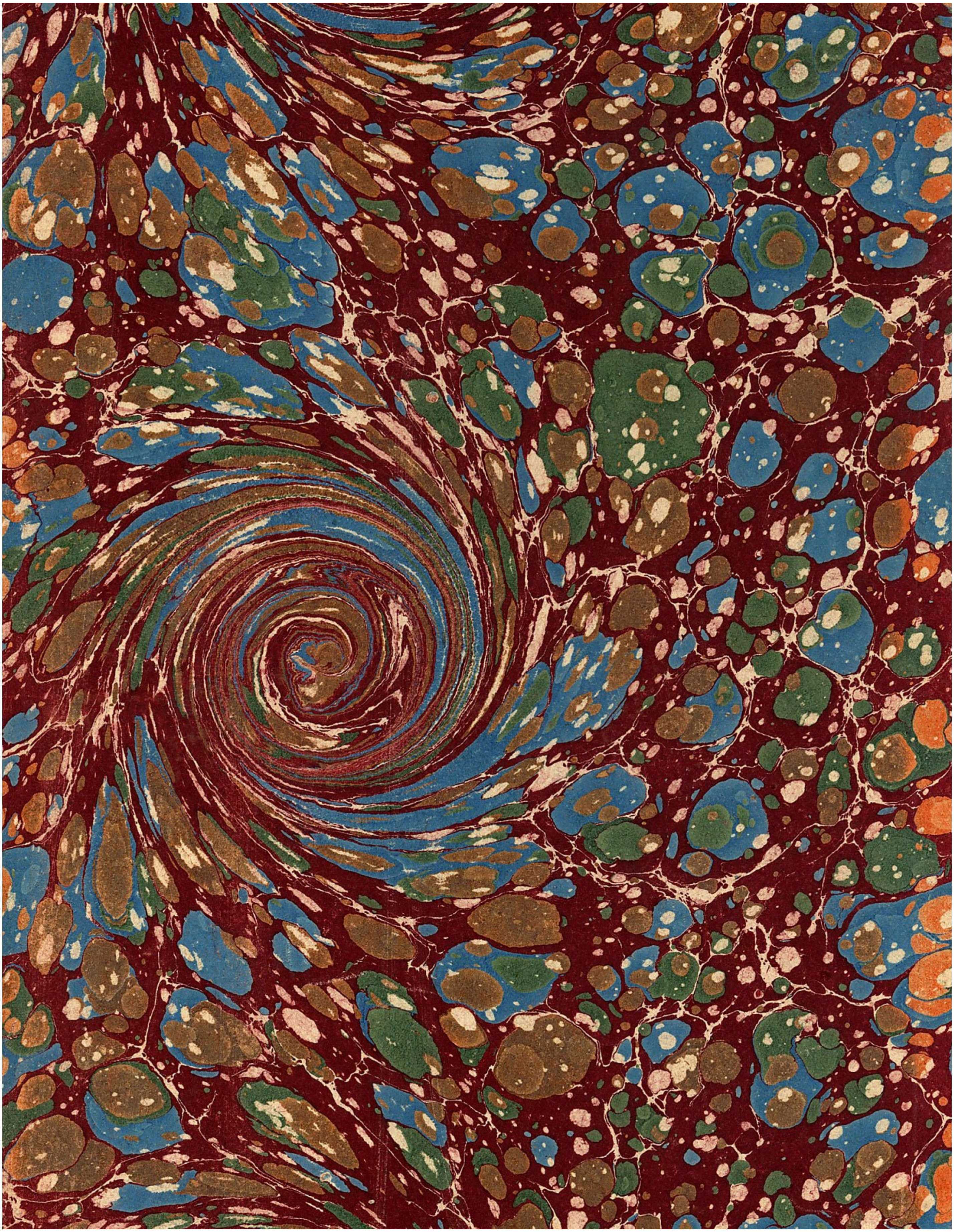
It's slightly rippled with a flat father
Figure
This long and tweedy coat of arms
With the coconut head
Walking down the burning streets
Searching burning widows
For familiar signs
Like Color TV by RCA
Or Fallout Shelter 4 MI[LES]
But the men are all gone now
And the children too
There's a crack in the storm clouds
And the trees are bent over in prayer

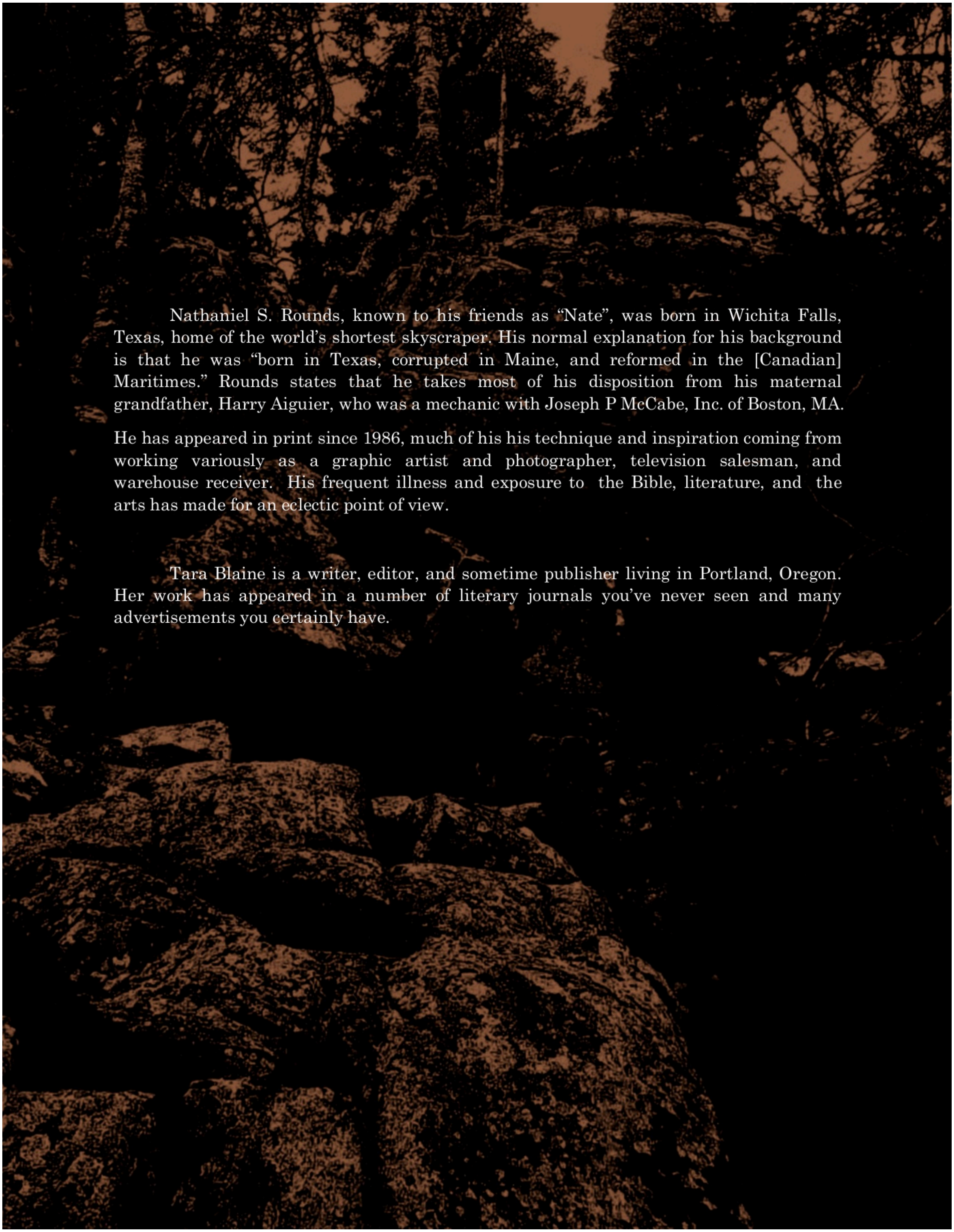
### You There

Laugh lines and signs of failing liver
Wrinkles and knobby belly
They say one thing:
The child has turned old
The child has turned into a crooked man
And he crumples up like a dry leaf
On the dance floor
Ask the janitor for a shovel
Scoop up that dry corpse from the dance floor
Do it quickly
Do it fast
Let the music last
And last

Photo credits: Front cover art: Freehand cutout of a photograph of a hieratic inscription on a pottery fragment. It records year 17 (the last year) of Akhenaten's reign and reference to wine of the house of Aten. Marl clay transport vessel. Reign of Akhenaten. From Amarna, Egypt. The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London. With thanks to the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL. CC. Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg). End papers: Handcrafted marbled endpapers of a book manually bound in France around 1880 (Giacomo Leopardi, Œuvres, vol. 2).Chronological diagram: Map of Mexico and Guatimala Engraved to Illustrate Mitchell's School and Family Geography [with] Map of the United States and Texas... From Mitchell's School Atlas by S. Augustus Mitchell. Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Company, [1844]. Map courtesy Dorothy Sloan-Rare Books, Austin, Texas. Cartoon portrait of Nathaniel S. Rounds by Paris Pâté. Prelude: Graphic painting after a photo of a side view of a 1934 Master Deluxe Sedan, 1950. CC GeorgeLouis at English Wikipedia. Inset: Photo of ostracon By Marsyas (Own work) [CC BY-SA 2.5 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)], via Wikimedia Commons. First section title artwork: Congress Street, Portsmouth, N.H. Extent: 1 print (postcard): linen texture, color; 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 in. Accession #: 06_10_002818. Date: between circa 1930 and circa 1945. Source: Boston Public Library Tichnor Brothers collection #65377. Author: Tichnor Brothers, Publisher. Inset: Photograph taken of the bust of Homer in the British Museum, London.CC JW1805 at en.wikipedia. Section 2: By Setimmp (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)], via Wikimedia Commons. By Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827) and Augustus Charles Pugin (1762–1832) (after) John Bluck (fl. 1791–1819), Joseph Constantine Stadler (fl. 1780–1812), Thomas Sutherland (1785–1838), J. Hill, and Harraden (aquatint engravers)[1] [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. Section 3: Section 4: Honey-bee (Apis mellifica). a, male (drone); b, queen; c, worker. (After Benton, Bull. 1 (n.s.) Div. Ent., U.S. Dept. Agr.). Illustration from 1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, article Bee. Section 5: Illustration from The Rosengarten (roughly translated as The Rosegarden for Pregnant Women and Midwives). Section 6: Didactic model of a chicken. Gallus gallus domesticus. CC Wagner Souza e Silva / Museum of Veterinary Anatomy FMVZ USPSection. Section 7: Otis Historical Archives National Museum of Health and Medicine. Engravings of Charlemagne and John Dryden inset are original to this publication. Section 8: English: Joseph Wright of Derby. Virgil's Tomb, with the Figure of Silius Italicus. 1779. Oil on canvas. 101.6 x 127 cm. Private collection. http://www.abcgallery.com/. Various polychords over Dm. Created by Hyacinth (talk) 23:30, 6 July 2009 using Sibelius 5. CC Hyacinth at the English language Wikipedia.Inset: Dead Sea Scroll - part of Isaiah Scroll (Isa 57:17 - 59:9), 1QIsab, uploaded by Daniel.baranek - http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qb.htm. Public domain. Section 9: Clipart from The Graphics Fairy. Section 10: Illustration from "Illustrerad verldshistoria utgifven av E. Wallis. volume I": Themistocles. Overlay: Depiction of a Greek trireme: this graphic was first published in May, Elmer; Stadler, Gerald; Votaw, John; Griess, Thomas (series ed) (1984) Ancient and Medieval Warfare: The History of the Strategies, Tactics, and Leadership of Classical Warfare, New Jersey, United States: Avery Publishing Group ISBN: 0-89529-262-9. Section 11: Old-time punishments by William Andrews. 1890 p140. Section 12: Etching after a Pixabay free stock photo, no attribution required. Section 13: Hamlet and the Grave Diggers, 1883, oil on canvas, 40 x 33.5 in. Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret. Back cover art: Charcoal on paper, Paris Pâté.







Nathaniel S. Rounds, known to his friends as “Nate”, was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, home of the world’s shortest skyscraper. His normal explanation for his background is that he was “born in Texas, corrupted in Maine, and reformed in the [Canadian] Maritimes.” Rounds states that he takes most of his disposition from his maternal grandfather, Harry Aiguier, who was a mechanic with Joseph P McCabe, Inc. of Boston, MA.

He has appeared in print since 1986, much of his his technique and inspiration coming from working variously as a graphic artist and photographer, television salesman, and warehouse receiver. His frequent illness and exposure to the Bible, literature, and the arts has made for an eclectic point of view.

Tara Blaine is a writer, editor, and sometime publisher living in Portland, Oregon. Her work has appeared in a number of literary journals you’ve never seen and many advertisements you certainly have.